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ESSAY ON THE QUESTION

“ ARE THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF THE POLITE
“ ARTS, IN ANY COUNTRY, CONNECTED WITH,
“ AND DEPENDING ON, THE POLITICAL STATE OF
“ THAT COUNTRY?”

Illustrious acts high raptures do infuse,
And every conqueror creates a muse.

WALLER.

BY WILLIAM PRESTON, ESQ. M.R.I.A.



READ, MARCH 4th, 1805.

THE present question, proposed by the Royal Irish Academy, is grand and comprehensive; and includes various discussions, bearing on, and influencing some of the most important interests of society, and most interesting topics of polite literature. At the same time it is very difficult of solution, from the multitude of enquiries, to which it leads, and the extent of literary research, which it demands. I state these difficulties, not by way of enhancing the merit of this Essay, but to bespeak the indulgence of the reader, to its defects.

It is not easy to return a precise answer to the present question; because the theoretical tendency, and natural

influence of governments are controlled, and counteracted, by collateral causes; in such a degree, that reasonings, from general principles, are opposed by facts; and no rule can be drawn from abstract reasoning, to which history does not instantly suggest some striking and remarkable objection. These collateral controlling causes are climate, religious and moral institutions, the temper, genius, and characters of particular individuals.

Thus it may happen, that a despotic government, unfavourable in itself (as we shall see, in the sequel of this Essay) to every species of cultivation, and liberal improvement, may be adorned, in the most eminent degree, with the fine arts, and become the residence of opulence, elegance, and commerce. But this effect must be ascribed to the influence, and peculiar character of individuals; as, for instance, of Augustus Cæsar; of some dynasties of the Egyptian, Persian, and Moorish princes; of Pope Leo X., and of Lewis XIV. While the inductions, which might be drawn from history, may be, sometimes, at variance with the conclusions of general theory, and the conclusions of general theory may be opposed by objections, drawn from history: yet, when the subject comes to be duly examined, this seeming contrariety will demonstrate a perfect uniformity of principle; and the theory will be confirmed by the very circumstances, which, at first sight, seem to be exceptions.

I shall endeavour to maintain the affirmative of the question, by considering what is meant by the expressions,

sions, *political state*; and, afterwards, by shewing the necessary influence of certain forms of government, and other political circumstances, on the fine arts. I shall next consider, how certain great historical events, by changing the political relations of countries, and influencing the state of society, have, at the same time, influenced the state of these arts. Lastly, I shall adduce a few striking facts, from the history of the arts themselves.

The expression, *political state of a country*, is exceedingly comprehensive. It extends, not only to the particular form of government, in any given country, and to the degree of civil liberty, which its inhabitants enjoy; but, also, to other circumstances, influencing the well-being, the feelings, and character of a nation; as extent of territory, commerce, foreign relations. If this is a fair explanation of the phrase, *political state*, it may be seen, what a vast field of discussion is opened, by the question proposed.

But, I trust, the narrow limits, by which an Essay of this nature is necessarily circumscribed, will concur, with the scanty information, and humble talents of the writer, to plead his excuse, for the imperfect execution of the task, proposed by the Academy.

Among the political circumstances of a country, the form of government has the greatest influence on the character and temper of the nation, and the destiny of the arts. But there are collateral circumstances, which may imperiously control the genius and tendency of government,

ment, or even dictate what form the government shall assume. Some of these are natural and permanent; others are accidental and transitory. The former are, soil, climate, and position, with respect to other nations and countries: the situation, whether continental or insular, maritime or inland. The latter are, prevalence of religion, talents of a ruler, character of neighbouring nations.

In the early stages of society, where the mind of man is little cultivated, or varied, by institutions; his desires are simple, and easily satisfied: he is not many degrees removed from the mere animal: his gratifications are mostly of the sensual kind: his artificial wants are few and trifling; and the arts, which minister to them, are proportionably rude, and, comparatively speaking, insignificant. Such is human nature, in the stages of the *warrior* and *hunter*. The rude decorations of their armour, the trophy of victory; the song, that rouses the *warrior* to battle, celebrates his achievements in fight, or attends him to the tomb, when his breath has fled; the hymn, that accompanies seed-time and harvest, that praises the Gods for their bounties, or deprecates their wrath by prayer; these, it should seem, are the only tribute, that the sturdy and rough children of the heroic ages deign to levy, from the *fine arts*. The pastoral age may require somewhat more. Ease and quiet, and a state between labour and rest, producing a relaxation of mind, with a sufficient degree of bodily health and strength, dispose men, more powerfully, in this state, than in the heroic, to the union of the
sexes.

sexes. Hence arise the passion of love, the solicitude to appear amiable,* the desire of pleasing, and being pleased. To satisfy this desire, the *fine arts* are called in aid. The dance is led; the song, the strains of the shepherd's pipe, are heard in every grove. The hand of the lover, guided by passion, attempts to pourtray the features, that have captivated his soul, and remain imprinted in his heart. Hence results a more diligent cultivation, a more extended use, and a more exquisite relish of the *fine arts*. The heroic, hunter, and pastoral states, gradually settle, into the elaborate and complex forms of civil government; which, in time, supersede that sort of family rule, that patriarchal, or despotic form of government, which universally obtains, among the primæval races of men; a form of government naturally growing out of their original state, and well suited to the simplicity of their early conceptions.

What are called the *fine arts*, arise, from the exertions of the human talents, to multiply the enjoyments or comforts of life. They are the objects of those appetencies, which prevail, in a more perfect state of society, and a more cultivated period of the human intellect; and are the consequence of a satiety of the enjoyments, which are merely necessary to the preservation of the human race. It is this constant endeavour of man, to encrease his comforts, and enjoyments, that gives activity to his existence, and furnishes employment, to his various faculties, of memory,

* See Essay on Amatory Poetry, in the preceding volume.

mory, invention, combination, reasoning; to the physical powers, which are momentarily put in action, at their requisition; and to his feelings, also, of love, hate, joy, and gratitude. Various moral causes, therefore, will concur, to render these *arts* more or less necessary to the happiness of men; and to produce a more or less successful exercise of them. The one is not always so much the necessary concomitant of the other, as we might expect. It does not follow, that, because men pursue with eagerness the *fine arts*, and find them necessary to their happiness, they should excel in them. We find inveterate scribblers, in poetry: execrable performers, in music: and miserable daubers, in painting; who delight themselves, as much as they annoy the rest of the world. The villas and improvements of many a citizen, and many another person, with a vulgar taste, may shew us, that an ardent love for the *arts*, may not always be joined with a true taste for exercising or employing them.

The successful cultivation of the *fine arts*, requires many combined particulars, as a foundation; a happy disposition of the human mind, a desire to be pleased, a cultivation of the human intellect, and a full possession of all its powers—memory—taste—fancy—judgment—reason; and the attainment of knowledge, to profit by the discoveries of past times, to perform certain works, whether mental or physical, with certainty and precision, and with the least possible labour, delay, and expence. In this chiefly consists the difference, between the efforts of polished

lished and learned nations, and those of people in a more early stage of society. The productions of the latter may, perhaps, shew more genius, but excellence in them is more rare; and they seldom exhibit accuracy and correctness. In reducing excellence to principle, consists the utility of criticism, and systems of rules, for exercising the *fine arts*. In some stages of society, certain feelings will peculiarly predominate: these will call for some displays of the *fine arts*, in preference to others; and will also enable men to exercise those *arts* more successfully. Thus, poetry and music may be more cultivated, and with greater success, in one stage of society than in another. Heroic poetry, and the graver lyric, may be the favourites and the ornaments of one stage of society; love-poetry, the drama, and satire, of another. But, in a general view, and abstracting from particular and local circumstances, all the *fine arts* will be most valued, most cultivated, and carried to the greatest perfection, where human society is in the most advanced and perfect state: that is to say, where man is in the fullest and freest enjoyment of the exercise of all his faculties; and where those faculties are improved and cultivated, in the highest degree, by a course of education. Man will not apply much to the gratification of artificial wants, while he is besieged by those which are natural and real. He will not pursue, or even understand, the refined luxuries and gratifications of the mind, while he is sunk, and engrossed by those which are merely sensual. He cannot cultivate

the *fine arts* to the best effect, unless, previously, his faculties are fully cultivated. They cannot be cultivated, but by a good education, of precept and example; therefore they cannot be duly cultivated, unless the form of government is good: that is to say, free. Or, supposing these faculties fully cultivated, man cannot exercise them, with the greatest advantage and proficiency, if this exercise of them is interrupted by fear, and restrained and fettered by the constant influence of a tyrannical and jealous government. Thus it will be seen, that, of necessity, the progress and relative prosperity, or decline of the *fine arts*, must be very much connected with the prevalence of particular forms of government.

Nations, as well as individuals, have particular characters, dispositions, and temperaments; as appears, by what the ancients have told us, of the Thracians, the Bœotians, the Æolians, the Spartans, and the Asiatics. These peculiar characters and temperaments are to be ascribed, partly, to forms of government, and education: partly, to the influence of religion: (if we are not rather to consider that as a part of education:) partly, to the force of climate; to which, though I would not allow such a wonder-working predominance, as is done by Montesquieu, I would still attribute great force. It is evident, that the preference of particular branches of the *fine arts*, and the happy cultivation of them, will result much from the national character and temperament. For instance, among a people, mild, amorous, gay, and fond of pleasure, such

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as were the people of Ionia, much time will be devoted to amusement; and men will cultivate the lighter strains of poetry, particularly erotic poetry, and the softest and most luxurious modes and measures of music. The acute and subtle character of the Arabians, inflamed and subtilized by the influence of a burning sun, under which they lived, led them to intricate metaphysical disquisitions; platonic conceits and refinements, in poetry; florid figures, in eloquence; and elaborate conceits, and far-fetched ornaments, in architecture. Here, then, is another aspect, under which the political circumstances of countries are to be considered, with respect to the growth and prosperity of the *fine arts*.

We are not to consider those wonderful phenomena, the poems of Homer, as forming an exception to the general principles, which may be laid down, respecting the state of the *fine arts*, in a particular stage of society. They are standing miracles, in the history of the human mind; since they contain notices and views, poetic beauties, and various traits of refinement and knowledge, which should seem to belong to a stage of society, much more advanced and perfect, than that in which we know they were produced. Another aspect, under which the political circumstances of a country may be considered, is its influence, with respect to morals. It is obvious, that certain forms of government are most favourable to morals. For example; the republican, the principle of which is virtue, inculcates strictness of morals, and a love of justice, with a

spirit of equality. It is equally obvious, that there is an intimate connexion between purity of morals, and a true and refined taste, which must be accompanied by purity of mind, dignity, and elevation of sentiment, a love of decorum, symmetry, grace, beauty, and good order. It is evident, that such a spirit is an admirable preparative for great exertions, not only in active life, but in the *fine arts*: that it tends to treasure up the stores of exalted conceptions, of great and magnificent ideas, from whence the poet, the painter, and the sculptor, derive the wonders of their respective *arts*. An imitation of the Divinity will impress the mind with divine thoughts and notions: and a refined taste in conduct, an abhorrence of the low, the base, and the little, will lead to a refined taste in composition; a feeling of the good, the great, and the fair. The characteristic of this will be, a noble and divine simplicity, a true and unaffected grandeur, not of tumid words, but of noble sentiments; a rejection of sordid and puerile conceits, of florid and affected ornaments. On the other hand, where corruption and vice predominate; where the lust of gain, and the rage of pleasure, bear sway; in proportion as the mind is corrupted and depraved, the taste is vitiated. All the forms and appearances of things, then, are distorted into error, by the gross and pestiferous atmosphere, in which virtue cannot breathe. All our views of life and conduct are inverted: all our notions are confounded: false measures of estimation and dishonour are introduced: the basest and most unworthy pursuits are followed

followed with the greatest avidity; while the most dignified and truly interesting objects are neglected and condemned, or even reprobated and vilified. Where luxury and corruption of morals universally prevail, frivolous and contemptible amusements, and base and sensual gratifications, will take place of refined pursuits, and elegant pleasures. Horace complains, that, even in his time, in the Augustan age, this began to be the case among the Roman knights, the most fashionable part of a Roman audience: **migravit jam ab aure voluptas, ad incertos oculos et gaudia vana.* Thus, impure pleasures, and frivolous amusements, particularly gaming, will supersede the refined, the intellectual enjoyments, which the *fine arts* afford. They will do more: by depraving the general mind, and vitiating the public taste, they will introduce a corrupt and despicable style, into all the productions of the *fine arts*. If these arts are still called for, by the vanity, the luxury, and prodigality of the age, they will become venal and sordid; they will endeavour to conform to the miserable taste of the ignorant, and the profligate individuals, who pay and patronize them. Nauseous flattery, trivial conceits, false wit, tumid and inflated eloquence, extravagant and ridiculous attitudes, will become their characteristic marks. The poet, the painter, the sculptor, and the musician, will be bribed, to prostitute their arts; to stoop to the most degrading tasks; to be-

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* Epist. I. Lib. II. ad Augustum.

come the panders of vice, and corrupt the rising generation, by perpetuating the monstrous images of the excesses and enormities of their shameless and brutal patrons. Propertius inveighs, with a truly poetical spirit, invigorated by honest indignation, against the licentiousness of his time: and yet the Romans had then travelled but half way in the road of depravity.

We must not think, that it was merely through the baleful effects of despotism, (though that had undoubtedly a great share,) that poetry and eloquence declined, as they did, at Rome, after the downfall of republican government. We are to attribute this base and melancholy change, as much, at least, to the corruption of morals, and the depravity of the Roman people, as to the oppression of the government. The satires of Juvenal, (making every allowance for poetical exaggeration, and the rage of a man, who seems to have been spited at the world, by neglect and misfortunes,) give a dreadful picture of the general and unbounded profligacy, which pervaded all classes of people, in his time. The prevalence of corrupt and dissolute manners, the reign of luxury, avarice, and prodigality, conjoined, will depend much on the political circumstances of the country, the commercial relations, the extent of empire, the riches, the possession of foreign colonies. Hence we find it is, that the true poetical spirit has declined, in these modern times. Hence I should not be much disposed, notwithstanding the great professions of the French government, and its literati, to
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augur any great proficiency towards excellence in the *fine arts*, while the morals of the people remain so profligate as they are at present. It is with concern and pain, that a friend to literature observes the paucity of ideas and multitude of words, the trite and flimsy productions, which occupy too much space, in the volumes of the National Institute. This, however, cannot justly be imputed, either to the French nation, who are endowed, by nature, with talents, and activity in employing them, beyond most people; or to the present government of France; or yet to the revolution: nor does it tend to contradict the assertion, that a republican form of government is peculiarly favourable to the *fine arts*, and the exertion of genius. It is owing to the want of education in the present generation, to the poison of unparalleled frivolity, and corruption* of manners. When a state sinks into luxury and degeneracy; though the artificial wants encrease, and, of course, the greater sums are employed to feed them; less expenditure is allowed to the encouragement of the *fine arts*. The passion of gaming frequently swallows up every other expensive pursuit. Juvenal mentions the rage for gaming, which prevailed in his time: "*positâ seil luditur arcâ.*" This horrid passion, which seems to prevail chiefly among the most savage and barbarous nations, (such were the Gauls, in the times of Cæsar, and the Germans, as described by Tacitus,) and the
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* See a late entertaining work—*Paris as it was and is*.

most effeminate and corrupted: from the same cause, a mind vacant of ideas, incapable of good, devoid of elegance and refinement, wholly engrosses the mind, to the exclusion of other objects: or, if room is spared for other enjoyments, they are the pleasures of the table, idle expense, fantastic extravagance, and tasteless magnificence. Dress, toys, baubles, gluttony, now consume the sums, which were formerly expended, by a national opulence, under the control of taste, on the valuable productions of painting, sculpture, and architecture. Even the governments of countries take a lead in these frivolities; and, by following and flattering the miserable and childish folly of the times, render the evil progressive. Thus, in ancient ages, a statue, a bust, a superb sepulchral monument, used to be the reward of heroic acts and superior merit; which at once perpetuated an emulation in moral excellence, and a taste in the *fine arts*. Now, the reward of virtue or heroism, is a red or a blue string, fit for a child's whistle; a festino, or a fire-work, which evaporates in smoke, and leaves no trace behind.

It is equally obvious, that peculiar forms of government must have very different, and distinguishable effects, on the human mind, from another consideration: that, in various forms of government, there are peculiar passions, which they tend to call forth; peculiar talents and exertions, which they demand, and put in action. There are in peculiar forms of government, appropriate and peculiar forms of conduct, suited to each; and each has a tendency

dency to form and establish a peculiar national character; while they seem to demand, and promote, exclusively, certain forms of intercourse, and states of society, proper to each. This will produce, not only a difference in the national character, but will, also, greatly affect the character of individuals, the pursuits and arts of the people. Hence will arise forms of industry, pleasures, and enjoyments; to which men will be disposed and guided, by the insensible and necessary operation of the forms of government under which they live. The characters and the habits of life and society, the artificial wants, the luxury, the pleasures and amusements of men, must all have a most powerful influence, on the prosperity and prevalence of the *fine arts*. Thus these arts must have a necessary connexion with certain forms of civil government; inasmuch as the latter necessarily influence the characters, both of the nation and the individual. We shall find this opinion fully supported, by a reference to history. If we turn to trace the progress of the *fine arts*, we shall see, that they have uniformly attended in the train of liberty: and that, although they may have flourished, for a time, under the shade of despotism, by extraordinary care, and as exotic plants; yet, under free governments, they have sprung, and flourished indigenous, and found a kindred soil and congenial sky. In Egypt, the dynasty of the Ptolemies were a family of learned princes, in uninterrupted succession; who, however different from each other in many particulars, all agreed in their admiration and liberal en-

couragement of the *fine arts*; and raised them to a pitch of excellence, which has not been surpassed, either by the former, or succeeding ages. If the court of Augustus was the residence of all that was excellent in the *fine arts*; the taste and patronage of the sovereign, and some remains of the spirit of freedom concurred, and produced a constellation of admirable men, that will render the Augustan age proverbial, and the wonder of latest time. The genius of the heroic Odenatus, and, still more, of the accomplished and philosophical Zenobia, raised, in the midst of deserts, a stupendous monument of industry, arts, and magnificence, where the classical genius seemed to be revived, in works that rivalled the sublime conceptions of ancient Greece. The race of enlightened sovereigns of Persia loved the Muses, and encouraged the bards of their country, by their munificence, to such admirable exertions, as place the poetry of the East nearly on an equal footing with that of ancient Greece. These, and some other similar instances, of which we shall speak more at large hereafter, are bright examples. But they are only exceptions, arising from the peculiar personal character of the individuals, ruling at the time; or from the influence of antecedent freedom, not yet worn out, but continuing to operate still on the general mind; which do not invalidate the abstract position, that arbitrary governments are alike unfriendly to all arts and sciences; and that the *fine arts* have a necessary connexion with particular forms of government, are dependent

dent on them; and, in consequence, have flourished most, where freedom has prevailed.

I proceed, meantime, to examine the cause of the tendency of different forms of government. In this enquiry, the precedence is due to that form of government which is most ancient, and has been held most venerable; the patriarchal or despotic form of government: not as being most favourable to the *fine arts*, but merely as being most ancient among men.

The despotic government destroys every thing, and repairs nothing. In a despotic government, the sovereign is every thing; the people nothing. “The savages of Louisiana,” (says Montesquieu,) “when they are desirous of eating the fruit, cut down the tree. This is an emblem of an arbitrary government.” “Every thing in a despotism ought to depend on two or three ideas: hence there is no necessity that any new ideas should be added.” “When we want to break a horse, we take care not to let him change his master, his lesson, or his pace. Such is the conduct of despotism, to its subjects.” The spirit of despotism is anxious, and tremblingly jealous. It is afraid of talents, of assemblages of the people, of mirth, and of all the enjoyments of life. It is superstitiously attached to all old forms and customs; because it knows that despotism is among the number, and exists, not by its own strength, but by the prejudices and weakness of others.

Quamvis

—Quamvis primo nutet casura sub Euro,
Pondere fixa suo est.*

Every attempt at improvement is reprobated, as the first step to innovation, the parent of revolution. It is apprehended, that if one stone should be taken away, from the structure of ancient abuse and prejudice, the whole would fall to the ground. “ Conscious† that it will not bear “ examination, the government of the Divan wraps itself “ up in impenetrable mystery. The prince, enclosed in “ his seraglio, cannot leave his luxurious abode, without “ alarm to those who keep him confined.” We know what an opposition and alarm have been created‡ in Turkey, by some attempts of the present emperor to introduce certain modern improvements. All enquiry creates alarm; as it might produce an examination, which would lead to resistance, and end in the overthrow of the government. Philosophy and science, must, therefore, be proscribed, as dangerous. And though, in general, a despotism may require, more than other governments, the practical exertions of philosophy, it is not favourable to philosophical discussions or writings. The despot fears them; because they lead to a doubt of his rights, and an examination of the foundation of his authority. The inquisitive spirit of philosophy is precisely what is calculated to excite the strongest

* Lucan.

† Montesquieu.

‡ By the Ulemas.

strongest alarm in the breast of a tyrant. Enquiry is, with him, a state offence. Even under Alexander the Great, who had the advantage of a learned education, and was formed by the lessons of a most excellent preceptor, the freedom of a philosopher was fatal to Callisthenes. To shew the condition of science and philosophy under a despotism, it is related, that the prince of philosophers had the meanness, or the policy, (call it which you will,) to write many of his most useful and admired works in a stile of studied obscurity, that they might be inaccessible to the multitude; fearful, as he was, of wounding the vanity of his royal pupil, by rendering that too common, which he was willing to value himself on understanding exclusively. Thus philosophy must be proscribed as dangerous, or obliged to prostitute herself. As to elegance, and the *fine arts*, the gloomy depressed spirits of the people dispose them to a stupified indolence, a melancholy cheerless course of sensuality, and of luxury; not unlike the stupified state of the patient *ox*, in a fat pasture, insensible of the weight of servitude, insensible of the uncertainty of his existence. All their few enjoyments are merely those of sense; a sense, blunted and imbruted by the torpid state of the mind. The fumes of opium and tobacco, the laziness and languor of a haram, bound the gratifications of the most splendid slaves. Poetry, music, sculpture, architecture, painting, receive no encouragement; at least, no judicious encouragement, tending to
their

their perfection, from the uncultivated minds, and degraded natures, of a race deprest by tyranny.

We see this plainly, in the accounts which travellers give us, from Busbequius and Rycaut, down to Eton, Olivier, and Wittman, of the government, manners, private life, amusements and pleasures of the Turks: all repeat the assertion, “ *that the Turks destroy every thing, and repair no-
“ thing.*” Their buildings are semi-barbarous: so are their manners. All their pleasures are insipid; all their magnificence is tasteless and tawdry. There is something uncouth in all their notions and productions. Wittman relates an anecdote, that strongly evinces the present unenlightened condition of the Turks, without the exception even of their principal and most distinguished personages. “ General Koehler was requested by the Grand Vizier, to
“ have a map of the world sketched out for him. This
“ being performed, a conversation ensued, in which the
“ General, having the map before him, told his Highness,
“ among other particulars, that the earth was round. This
“ information caused no small degree of surprise to the
“ Turkish minister; and he shewed, by his reply, that he
“ was disposed to doubt the truth of the assertion. *If (he
“ observed) the earth is round, how can the people, and
“ other detached objects, on the half beneath, be prevented
“ from falling off?* When he was told, that the earth revolved round the sun, he displayed an equal degree
“ of scepticism; observing, that if that was the case, *the
“ ships*

“ *ships bound from Jaffa to Constantinople, instead of proceeding to that capital, would be carried to London, or elsewhere.*”* It is easy to be seen, how much the prosperity of the *fine arts* is connected with the prosperous state of the individual in society; with the general opulence of the community, the prevalence of commerce, the free intercourse of man with man, and the security of persons and property.†

The various accounts of the state of the Turkish empire, of the government, or rather of the methodized anarchy, of the Beys in Egypt, and of the other states, where despotism prevails, shew what the *fine arts* may hope, from arbitrary government. Despotism is highly unfavourable to commerce, from the insecurity of persons and property, in general; the jealousy with which strangers are regarded; the constant drains to which trading people are peculiarly subject, both from regular and systematic extortion of the government; and from occasional acts of violence and rapacity, by the great men and officers of court. Hence results a prevalent spirit of dishonesty, fraud, circumvention, and usurious dealing, on the part of the traders and monied men. For they are led to extort exorbitant gains, to counterbalance the dangers of their situation, and the periodical losses, to which they are inevitably subject. In such countries, the accumulation of
wealth

* See Wittman's Travels, p. 123.

† See the Accounts of the neglect of Agriculture, on the Barbary Coast

wealth rests in itself, and is its own reward, or rather its own punishment. It does not bring increase of gratification, but increase of uneasiness. Wealth does not produce an exhibition of magnificence, or an appearance of opulence; since, under arbitrary governments, the reputation of wealth is too frequently a state crime. In the East, the possession of riches is concealed, with the same care, that, in other countries, which enjoy a free government, it is displayed. There perpetual instances occur, of people burying their riches, while they live in apparent poverty. Riches, under such governments, do not confer power; on the contrary, they make the miserable owner a mark for oppression; they give him the fatal privilege of being in hourly apprehensions of torture and death.* This involuntary sumptuary law of fear, in states, where the safety of the individual requires the affectation of poverty, is manifestly inauspicious to the arts of elegance and refinement. In such a state, also, the maxims, both of political and private œconomy, are little known; the science of government is at the lowest ebb; there is no such thing as the patronage of arts, or the encouragement of commerce, by the state. We find, that a number of travellers all concur, in an extraordinary manner, in their description of the degraded state of the arts, in countries where they
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* Under the old government of France, the farmers were driven to go bare-foot, and to affect the appearance of poverty, to avoid certain taxes, in the nature of tithes.

once had their birth, and grew to maturity, under happier forms of government. Far from being friendly to commerce with the rest of the world, “such a state is happiest, (says Montesquieu,*) when it can look upon itself “as the only one in the world: when it is environed “with deserts, and separated from those people, which it “calls barbarians.” Thus, the Turks affect to call other nations *swine* and *dogs*; and treat them with contempt, as profane and unhallowed.†

Despotic governments fear the approach of strangers, who may espy the nakedness of the land; who may contribute to open the eyes of the miserable people to the abuses of government, and awaken them to a sense of their true condition; who may introduce foreign notions, and a spirit of innovation; all which would be dangerous to the repose of government. We perceive what anxious care and jealousy the people of China and Japan display, on this subject; under what close restrictions the intercourse with strangers is laid. Fear is the principle of a despotism; the end, tranquillity. Under such governments there arises a neglect of agriculture, because there is no secure property in the land, and the prince is general proprietor and heir of his subjects.‡ If the prince intermeddles in trade,

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* Spirit of Laws, Liv. V. cap. xiv.

† See Sonnini, Denon, Olivier, Walsh, Wittman, Baron Stolberg, &c. See also Eton's Account of the Turkish Empire.

‡ See the writers quoted above, and Rycaut's State of the Ottoman Empire; Maillet, Volney, and Reynier, in their accounts of Egypt.

all industry is ruined. The *fine arts* can be little progressive, where nothing is repaired, nothing improved: where houses are built, merely for the necessity of habitation, without any great regard to duration, elegance, or convenience. There is no digging of ditches, planting of trees, or agricultural improvements: every thing is drawn from the ground, and nothing restored to it: no care is taken to provide against the deficiency of unpropitious seasons; or to guard the country from the ravaging inroads of seas, rivers, or shifting sands, by mounds, embankments, canals, or plantations. Thus famine is a frequent visitant,* and the land becomes a desert.† The *fine arts* are yet further retarded by another principle of despotism. It is a decided foe to all innovation. The manners, pursuits, arts, and usages, even indifferent things, of the earliest times, are preserved inviolate, as if they were something sacred. Thus we find the arts, the manners, and state of society, exhibited to us in the Scriptures, and in the poems of Homer, still remain unaltered in the East. Though this may be partly owing to climate, yet much must be ascribed to political causes, included in the government.

Though agriculture is in a low condition in despotic states, yet the people are rather agricultural than manufacturing:

* We find, in the early periods of English history, when the government was nearly arbitrary, that famines were frequent.

† The shifting sands daily spread, in Egypt: the ancient canals are suffered to fall to decay. It is apprehended by many, that the most fertile country in the world will, in time, become a desert.

facturing: again, they are rather more manufacturing than commercial. The reason, why agriculture prevails over manufactures, is manifest: the safety and comfort of the subject, in despotic states, depend much on his being unknown. If we except the ministers of the government, who exercise the oppressions of the tyrant, individuals are only observed by the sovereign to their cost. Men wish, therefore, to withdraw themselves from sight; they fly the populous city; they seek the quiet and retirement of the distant plain: “see, from their mother earth, not God’s blessings spring, but mere subsistence; and eat their bread in peace and privacy.”* Under a despotism, simple unambitious professions are most eligible: such is agriculture. Mechanics are led to associate in greater numbers; their callings are usually exercised in a gregarious manner: this exposes them to the notice of government; their number makes them objects of its jealousy, or its avarice: collected in herds, as they are, it is easy to pounce down upon them, and, at one grasp, to oppress and fleece them. Artisans are naturally led, also, to resort to cities; where they are more readily supplied with the raw materials of their respective manufactures, and find a more certain and advantageous market for their productions. There they are under the superintendence, and heavy hand, of a severe and terrible police; their elaborate and costly manufactures are collected in shops and warehouses, and serve

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* Mason.

to allure the eyes, and excite the malignity of the despot, and his voracious and unfeeling creatures. We find the Beys in Egypt perpetually squeezing the manufacturers and merchants. In the same manner, the arbitrary kings of England, in the ruder ages, used to oppress and plunder the Jews. Thus, in Asia, domestic slavery, and despotic rule, walk hand in hand. In a government like this, whose* principle requires, that a particular regard be paid to its tranquillity, and which, by the extreme of subordination, calls for peace, it is necessary, above all things, that the women should be confined, lest their intrigues should prove fatal to their husbands. The effects of this seclusion of the women, on the intercourse of society, and, in consequence, on the *fine arts*, on manufactures, and commerce, are very apparent. A government, which has not time to examine minutely into the conduct of its subjects, views them with a suspicious eye; merely because they appear, and suffer themselves to be known. It will readily be conceived, what influence the peculiarly servile condition of women must have, on music, poetry, and painting: arts, which are adapted to please the fair sex; and derive much of their powerful incentives and encouragement from their favour.

Such an arbitrary prince, as has been described, has so many vices and imperfections, that he is afraid to expose his natural stupidity to public view. He is concealed in his palace,

* See Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, Vol. I.

palace, and the people are ignorant of his situation. Whatever does not directly menace the palace and the capital, makes no impression on proud, ignorant, and prejudiced minds. As to the concatenation of events, the members of his cabinet, or divan, are unable to trace, to foresee, or even to conceive it. The science called politics, with its several springs and laws, must here be very limited; the whole is reduced to the reconciling of the political and civil government of the country, to the domestic; the officers of state to those of the seraglio. Augustus and Tiberius subjected satirical writers to the punishment of treason, as having violated the law of majesty. Cremutius Cordus was accused of having called Cassius, "*the last of the Romans.*" We have, in the history of Henry I., an instance of the situation of genius and talent, under despotic power, in the fate of an unfortunate minstrel,* who had satyriized that monarch. A similar instance occurs, in the treatment which the author of a pasquinade experienced, from Sixtus Quintus.

We see something of the genius of arbitrary government, in the various accounts of travels into China. There we find, that the rulers do not encourage the approach of strangers, and that they restrain the egress of their own subjects,

* His name was Luke de Baras. He was sentenced to have his eyes pulled out; and though the Earl of Flanders warmly interceded for him, the cruel sentence was executed, and the unhappy satyrist died of wounds received in struggling with the executioner.

subjects, though the country has immense inland navigation on its rivers and canals, and a coasting trade, for the communications of the natives with each other, and is overburthened with its population: and, although it has commodities and manufactures, which foreigners are most desirous of obtaining, the Chinese do not send out their fleets, or engage in distant expeditions. The Japanese government is still more circumspect, subject to alarm, and repulsive of strangers. Woe to the *fine arts*, and the professors of them, if the sovereign should take a fancy to cultivate them! His affection and attachment will be as fatal to them, as the love of Jupiter was to Semele, in fable. All the *fine arts* declined in Rome, under Nero and his successors; although that strange inconstant monster not only admired, but cultivated them with so much ardour, that he produced epic poems and tragedies, and sung and played, for nights together, on the public stage; and although his sensibility to poetic fame was such, that his jealousy and envy of the rising talents of Lucan, are supposed to have occasioned the death of that admirable poet.

The *fine arts* were at a still lower ebb, under that miserable race of tyrants, the later Greek emperors. The drama, if it produced any thing, was probably detestable. Yet these sovereigns mixed, with an extraordinary degree of anxiety, in all the petty disputes and disturbances of the theatre; as distinguished and marshalled, with the various colours of the different factions. Why, then, was
Egypt

Egypt remarkable for learning, the cradle of all the sciences? Why, in that famous land, was the fountain, to which all mankind resorted, to drink the streams of knowledge? The history of this people will confirm the observations I have hazarded.

The Egyptians are said to have been the first, who found out the rules of government, and the arts of making a people happy, the true end of government. Their first kings did not live after the manner of other monarchs, or govern by their own arbitrary will and pleasure, in the management of public affairs, or even in their private way of life. No slave, bought with money, or servant, born in the house, was admitted into their service: they were attended by the sons of the priests; who, after having received a suitable education, were, at the age of twenty, placed near the royal person; that, being attended, both night and day, by men of superior birth and extraordinary merit, the king might learn nothing unworthy of his station, and incur less danger of falling into vicious excess.

There were stated hours, both of night and day, when the king was obliged to give attention to business, and serious employments. When he first arose in the morning, he perused the letters and dispatches from various parts of his dominions: then, after bathing, he put on splendid robes, and proceeded to sacrifice in the temple. The victims being brought to the altar, the chief priest, in the presence of the king and the assistants, prayed, in a loud voice, for the health and prosperity of the king, who governed

verned according to justice, and the laws of the kingdom. On this occasion, he enlarged on his royal virtues; observing that he was pious towards the *gods*, tender towards his people; moderate, just, magnanimous, of strict veracity, liberal, master of himself, punishing below the magnitude of the offence, and rewarding above the measure of the service. He then spoke with execration of the faults, which the king might have committed, through surprise or ignorance; at the same time absolving him, and laying the blame* on his ministers and council. Thus they strove to win the king to virtue; not by sharp admonitions, but by the praises due to good actions. After the sacrifice, a priest read, out of the sacred records, such actions of famous men as might be of use in life, and fit for imitation; that the king might be instructed, and govern his state, according to their maxims and examples. Even in the economy of the king, all his actions were defined and regulated, as to time and place, by laws and customs: by them even his food and drink were prescribed. It is said, that in a certain temple, in Thebes, was a pillar, on which were imprecations against a king, who had first introduced luxury into Egypt. It was not in the power of the king to wrong or oppress the subject: he could not punish any
 person

* It is remarkable to see the conformity between this practice, and the constitutional doctrine of a limited monarchy, as received in England. *The king can do no wrong*; his faults are those of his ministers; but these ministers may be impeached and punished.

person out of passion or caprice; or give judgment, in any case, otherwise than as the law ordained. This admirable constitution, and most of the privileges of the people, remained under the Grecian race of monarchs; many of whom were wise and beneficent kings, and consulted the happiness of their subjects, in every particular; and especially in the encouragement of knowledge, commerce, and the arts. Even the worst and weakest princes of this dynasty, were munificent and liberal to learned men and artists; and invited men of talents, from all parts, by the most splendid rewards; formed magnificent collections of books, paintings, and sculptures; and themselves excelled in learning, and many of the arts they patronized.* Thus

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* Athenæus relates of Ptolemy, who was nick-named Physcon, from his corpulence, and Cacergetes, from his cruelty, that every species of art and science was cherished and taught, in Egypt, in his time. This prince, having put to death a great number of the citizens of Alexandria, and banished others, who were attached to his brother, from whom he had usurped the crown, filled his dominions with grammarians, philosophers, geometricians, musicians, schoolmasters, and other persons, capable of perfecting the arts; who, having no other subsistence than the fruits of their labour and diligence, contributed greatly to the propagation of knowledge, and refinements, and the love of the arts. The father of Cleopatra, and last of the Ptolemies, derived the name of Auletes, or the Flute-player, from his excessive attachment to that instrument. Strabo says of him, that, besides his debaucheries, he applied himself, in a particular manner, to playing on the flute. He had such an opinion of his abilities, that he instituted musical contests at his palace, where he disputed the prize with the first musicians of his time. And as the dress of players on the flute, among the ancients, was something peculiar to the profession, he submitted to wear the buskins, and even the bandage

we see the history of Egypt formed an exception to the general conclusion, respecting the state of men in society, in the East; but none to the general conclusions, as to the tendency of arbitrary governments, with respect to the *fine arts*. We shall, perhaps, see hereafter, why Egypt formed an exception, in the first respect, till she was overwhelmed, with the rest of the world, by the policy and military genius of Rome.

It is equally easy to account for the flourishing state of the *fine arts*, in the Augustan age; and when the phenomenon comes to be explained, it supports the general theory. Though the reign of Augustus was arbitrary in fact, it was not so in appearance. The forms of a republic subsisted; the senate met, and even preserved the appearance of free debate. Consuls, and other magistrates, such as were in use while Rome was free, continued to be elected, or rather nominated; and possessed the ensigns and pageantry, without the reality of power. The people were still unbroken to the yoke. The memory of the fate of the first Cæsar was yet recent. The politic Augustus was unwilling to irritate his subjects, by employing a galling curb,
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bandage and veil of the tibicen: as may be seen, says Dr. Burney, by a beautiful amethyst, in the possession of the King of France; which is supposed to have been engraved by command of Auletes, and worn by him, to gratify his vanity, on account of his musical excellence. The name of Auletes is seriously given to this prince, both by Cicero and Strabo, who was his contemporary. The former could not have meant any contempt, for he had an esteem for him. See Burney's History of Music, Vol. I. p. 229.

which might rouse them to a sense of their degraded condition. He affected to mix with the people. He professed the manners and sentiments, and affected the garb of a private citizen; as was, in after times, practised by Cosmo de Medici. He invited familiarity: he made a parade of urbanity, and seemed to feel the charms, and delight in the intercourse of private friendship. He let the reins of government flow loose, on the necks of the governed: and wished to form the Roman people to the oblivion of past liberty, and the habitude of servile obedience, by luxury, sensual indulgences, and the comforts and blandishments of peace. In such a scheme, the *fine arts* were not forgotten or excluded; they were part of his plan: they were ancillary to his purpose. Notwithstanding all the care and policy of Augustus, the seeds of liberty were not wholly stifled: there was a latent effort, an unconquerable tendency to vigour and vegetation. Through all the super-incumbent oppression, there was a lively, though afflicting memory of the past, which no arts of blandishment, no influence of terror, could wholly eradicate. This spirit led Virgil, though a court poet, to place Cato, as a lawgiver, among the good and just in the Elysian shades. This spirit emboldened Horace, though the favourite of the usurper,* and a man of worldly prudence, to allude, without fear, to his having borne arms, in the ranks of those who fought for freedom. This spirit taught an annalist to

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call

* He used to call him, “ lepidissimum homuncionem.”

call Cassius, who had stained his hands in the blood of an usurper, the last of the Romans. This spirit dictated the lofty declamation of Lucan, and the indignant and high-minded invectives of Persius and Juvenal. And, finally, this spirit produced repeated struggles for freedom; and those conspiracies, under which some of the Roman oppressors of the groaning world sunk. The mind, therefore, as yet, retained its energy unimpaired: but the deterioration of genius, and declension of the arts, under the baleful influence of tyranny, was very rapid.

Let us proceed to the splendid age of Lewis XIV., when “ *pensioned Boileau lashed, in honest strain, flatterers* “ *and bigots;*” and

“ Late Corneille, with Lucan’s spirit fir’d,
“ Breath’d the free strain, as Rome and he inspir’d.”

The ruling passion of this king was vanity. His vanity, however, was connected with a generous and exalted nature, and a good understanding; which directed him to place its gratification in noble and sublime objects, and works of magnificence. He signalized his reign, not only by military trophies and conquests, but also by the splendor of genius, and the embellishments of those liberal arts, which adorn an age and country with their monuments, and are able to make luxury appear a virtue. He gave the utmost encouragement to manufactures, arts, poetry, painting, philosophy, architecture, sculpture and music.

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The views of the sovereign were powerfully seconded, by the talents of an able and magnanimous minister,* of a spirit and temper congenial to those of his master. Thus his reign produced a number of immortal names; in architecture and painting, Le Brun, Le Sueur, the Poussins; in sculpture, Bernini; in music, Rameau, B. Lully; in philosophy, Des Cartes, Gassendi, Cassini, Malbranche, Leibnitz; in poetry, Boileau, the Corneilles, Racine, Quinault, La Fontaine, J. B. Rousseau, &c.; in eloquence, Massillon, Bourdaloue, Flechier, Fenelon, Pere Bossuet, &c., a splendid catalogue! Besides this, France must not be considered as an absolute despotism: Montesquieu affects to treat it as a limited monarchy: and even then began to dawn the spirit of philosophical enquiry, and free discussion, the power of ridicule, (that touchstone of imposition and ancient abuses,) and satire. These, under Lewis XIV., notwithstanding the imposing grandeur of that monarch's person and measures, opened the career of animadversion and innovation, to the bold spirits which succeeded. First, to the president, Montesquieu, whose works contain many severe and direct attacks on the abuses of government, and the baneful influence of despotism; then, to Rousseau, Voltaire, and d'Alembert, who attacked ancient abuses still more, with all the powers of genius and eloquence, in their writings. We even find the pious and mild Fenelon, in his *Telemaque*, uttering lessons of clemency, justice, the
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* Louvois.

love of peace, and the duty of a prince to respect and preserve the persons and properties of his subjects and neighbours; which convey the most pointed and energetic censure, on the vain-glorious and relentless Lewis XIV., and his schemes of ambition. But, if we consider France as a despotism, such free exertions of genius were contrary to the despotic spirit; and the event corroborates the general position, “that arbitrary power, by its principle, “must counteract and hate the progress of the *fine arts* :” since, if we consider the government, then existing in France, as arbitrary, we must own, that, by departing from its principles and maxims of policy, and not only tolerating, but encouraging the *fine arts*, it prepared the way for its own downfall. The free unfettered exercise of the faculties of man, being, in some degree, permitted, they expanded themselves; and acquiring force, with a geometrical progression, scorned to be restrained within any bounds but what themselves prescribed. There was, indeed, in France, a constant and unconquerable tendency to freedom, even under the most violent and convulsive exertions of tyranny. All this ended in the subversion of monarchy, and the establishment of the wildest and most licentious forms and principles of democracy.

In a well regulated republic, the condition of citizens is moderate, equal, easy, and agreeable: every thing partakes of the benefit of public liberty;* even the condition of the women.

* Montesquieu.

women. The general conversations are more and more instructive: there is less sensuality, but more true pleasures, and rational enjoyments. This leads to a more judicious cultivation of the *fine arts*; yet not alike of every branch. There are some, as we shall see hereafter, which do not thrive much on democracies. It must be owned, that, in republics, there is often a pragmatic spirit, a certain hardness and unbending nature; perhaps, too, a certain sameness of character. In free governments, the people are the best and most munificent patrons of all the liberal and pleasing arts. It is remarkable, that, in England, the *fine arts* have flourished, and yet have experienced very little patronage from the sovereigns. Simplicity of manners, moderation, frugality, regard to decorum, are the virtues of a republic. Every man is interested in the exercise of these virtues, because it is necessary to the well-being of the state. Every man, therefore, is an inspector of the conduct of his fellow citizens, a censor of manners, and a restraint on what is wrong. In a republic, by this means, the moral sense will be particularly cultivated and refined; and the perfection of this sense is intimately connected with a correct taste and judgment. Purity of mind, and undulterated taste, are essentially requisite to success, in the higher walks of poetry; and to that correctness and rectitude of spirit, which alone are able to relish the sublime graces of poetry, and become the parents of sound criticism: while the forms of the good and fair, the excellent
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and decorous, are thus presented to the mind. Look on the small state of Athens, scarce larger than a single county of England, and consider what admirable things she performed, in architecture, painting, sculpture, eloquence, poetry, and philosophy. Many of her wonders have survived the wreck of time, and are still inimitable by modern art. We are astonished at the mighty exertions, the superb monuments, of a small state like Athens. But the wonder is explained, when we consider, that the love of glory, joined with frugality, may affect as much as vanity, combined with wealth and luxury. Democracy encourages the spirit of frugality in the individual, as much as monarchy does the love of splendor.

The eloquence of Greece surpassed that of Rome; because, in democracies, eloquence chiefly flourishes. It is there a great engine of government: all things are transacted openly, and on debate: it is the key to the affections of the people: it becomes the means of rising to the first honours of the state. Thus Greece anciently became the great school and theatre of eloquence. In a democracy, and in a despotism, there is an equality; but these equalities are of different kinds. In the democracy, it is equality of rule: under a despotism, it is equality of servitude and submission. In the democracy, it is equality of rights and privileges: in the despotism, it is equality of weakness and degradation. In a democracy, the people are identified with the government: in a despotism, the government

government is wholly distinct and separate from the people, and seems to have different feelings. In a democracy the people are all in all: we are perpetually told of the majesty of the people. In a despotism the people are nothing. A democratic government is ever studious of public magnificence; her rewards are, generally, the productions of the *fine arts*, orations, elegies, pictures, statues, triumphal arches, and monuments. It is unnecessary to mention, how favourable this must have been to poetry, oratory, sculpture and architecture: indeed it is obvious, that the popular assemblies were the nursing parents of poetry and eloquence. The effect of a general participation in the administration of government, must be, to form a refined and well-informed population, to educate the public mind, and call forth the mass of talents and good sense, which exists in a nation. It will produce a greater attention to correctness and propriety, in speaking and writing the language of the country; because every individual will feel, that he may, at some time or other, be called upon, to discuss important subjects, and to deliver his sentiments in public. The citizens will, therefore, study their native tongue, and understand it in perfection: they will comprehend all its force and beauty, and be masters of all the delicacies and refinements of speaking. All this must be highly favourable to every species of composition; since it must incite and lead men to cultivate the vernacular language of their country. This is the first and true foundation of the studies of poetry

and eloquence. In Athens, the perfection and graces of the language were generally understood, and highly appreciated. If a public speaker happened to misplace a word, or employ a faulty or inelegant expression or phrase, it was immediately perceived by the audience, and followed by general marks of disapprobation. Thus the *Attic* style of writing and speaking, became the model of elegance, refinement, purity and grace. When we wish, even at this day, to describe a peculiar delicacy and happiness of wit, and a correct neatness, and classical beauty of style, we call them *Attic*. Something similar was produced, by the influence of a free government, at Florence.* The *lingua volgare* was there refined and polished, to an extraordinary degree; and was written and spoken by the Florentines, with so much purity, that “*lingua Toscana in bocca Romana*,” “the Tuscan tongue, the Roman accent,” is a well known proverb.

The frugality, resulting from simplicity of manners, and the spirit of equality, which prevails in a republic, is highly favourable to commerce; which, while it ministers to the luxury of others, is sparing and severe in itself. It is true, that the state of society, in the ancient world,

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* The government of Florence underwent various changes, from time to time; but still the spirit of democracy predominated. By the ancient government, twelve citizens, with the name of *Anziane*, were elected to preside over the government. Their office was annual, and two foreigners were appointed judges: one was stiled *Capitano del Popolo*.

was not so favourable to the advancement and perfection of manufactures, as it seems to be, in these times. Manufactures were then, in general, carried on by slaves, who worked for the emolument of their proprietors.* Such an enforced exercise of trades could not have exhibited that energy of industry, that unremitting and eager application, that chearful activity and display of talent, that extraordinary fertility of invention, followed up by an adequate degree of labour, ready to execute, which characterize the works of freemen. Yet most of the republics of ancient times were commercial. Athens, Corinth, Rhodes, Tyre, Heraclæa, Byzantium, Marseilles, and, above all, the state of Carthage, possessed many ships, and carried on an extensive commerce, which brought them in great riches. In later times, the flourishing states of Venice, Genoa, Florence, Pisa and Lucca, Holland, the towns of the Hanseatic League, Geneva; and, in our own days, the new republic of the United States of America: all concur, to shew the intimate connexion between republican freedom and the commercial spirit; and the tendency of the for-

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* Demosthenes, the orator, was proprietor of a number of slaves, who were employed in the business of armourers. Cornelius Nepos describes the family of Atticus, (v. Att.) “*usus est familiâ, si utilitate judicandum est, optimâ; si formâ, vix mediocri: namque in eâ erant pueri literatissimi anagnosti optimi, et plurimi librarii ut ne pene pedisequus quidem quisquam esset qui non utrumque horum pulchre facere posset. Pari modo artifices ceteri, quos cultus domesticus desiderat, apprime boni.*” The elder Pliny tells us, that, till the year U. C. 580, there was no profest public baker at Rome.

mer, to produce agriculture, manufactures, and general industry. There are particular causes, had we time to dwell on them, which, at present, render the American republic backward, in the fine and elegant arts.

While monarchies patronize arts, and manufactures, by luxury, expense, and a large consumption; republics support them, by parsimony, the spirit of equality, and habits of sobriety and industry. A love of the democracy is, likewise, that of frugality: this must limit the artificial wants, the importation of foreign luxuries, and the extension of those arts, that minister to mere sensual pleasures. As equality of fortune supports frugality, so the latter maintains the former; and both concur in the preservation of freedom. "True it is," (says Montesquieu,)* "that
 " when a democracy is founded in commerce, private
 " people may acquire vast fortunes, without a corrup-
 " tion of morals: this is, because the spirit of commerce
 " is naturally attended by that of frugality, economy and
 " moderation, of prudence, tranquillity, order and rule.
 " So long as this spirit subsists, the riches it produces
 " have no ill effects." As luxury and gross sensual indulgences are incompatible with the true republican spirit, the sublime mental gratifications, which result from an expansion of the powers of the mind, a communication of exalted sentiments, a consciousness of the dignity of human nature, and a contemplation and enjoyment of
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* Spirit of Laws, B. V. c. 6.

the sublime productions of genius and intellect, are prized and cultivated. We see how favourable all this must prove, to the cultivation and perfection of the *fine arts*, especially in their most elevated departments.

The popular assemblies, the theatre, the academy, the Lyceum at Athens, even the private society of the principal citizens, were schools of eloquence, poetry, music, and philosophy. Thus the very drinking songs, or scholia,* which delighted an Athenian company, in the moments of festivity, were sublime moral odes, written by their most eminent sages. The dialogues of the Athenian writers, on the deepest subjects of politics and philosophy, are in the form of convivial meetings, *symposia* or banquets. This is nothing fanciful or imaginary, but a true picture of the manners of the country, and the time. When there was perfect personal freedom; including, as one of its most valuable branches, the uncontrolled intercourse of man with man, and the free communication of thought, through liberty of speaking and writing; conversations were both frequent and delightful, and usually turned on the most interesting and important subjects; and were equally marked, by elevation of sentiment, and purity of expression. Hence it was by no means surprising, that the most grave and important subjects should be discussed, in the table-talk of their banquets.

This tendency and influence of the republican spirit did not operate so much, it is true, in the military republics
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* One of these scholia is written by Aristotle, Ἀρετὴ πολυμοχθε, &c. &c.

of Greece, which do not appear to have excelled in the *fine arts*. The reason of this was, that these governments enjoined such a strictness of discipline, and severity of manners, that all relaxation and amusement, music and dancing excepted, were proscribed; as either tending to waste time, or to enervate the mind and body. Besides, these republics banished wealth, and prohibited the citizens from commerce, and the exercise of gainful professions; and obliged them, by law, to remain idle. In the commercial republics, on the contrary, the government endeavoured to inspire the love and habits of industry. A law of Solon made idleness a crime; and insisted, that each citizen should give an account of his manner of living. Such a law must have produced an activity of mind, a due cultivation of all its powers, and an economical distribution of time.

The republican form of government produced an elated spirit, a dignity of mind, favourable to the higher kinds of poetry; as the epic, dramatic and lyric, and the sublime pursuits of philosophy. Every man was led to the study of public affairs: every man was in the habit of conferring freely on the most important subjects. This introduced the peculiar study of moral philosophy, and political economy. This produced a correct and noble way of thinking, and contributed much to the excellence of oratory. This general elevation, and nobleness of sentiment, must have contributed greatly, to form the admirable tragic poets, who flourished at Athens. It is a most extraordinary

extraordinary circumstance, in the history of literature, that a state so small, and a population so confined, as those of Athens, should, within a very small space of time, have produced three such dramatic poets, as Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The temper of the people is marked, particularly, by the purity, the gravity and dignity of sentiment, which appear in these authors; and the number of important maxims and reflexions, in morals and politics, which are introduced in their writings.

Though simplicity of manners, and frugality, are required, by the republican spirit, in the individual, republics exult in their riches, and acts of magnificence: they contrast the great works, and splendid expenditure of the community; their vast monuments, their sumptuous public buildings, their pompous shows, and magnificent scenic representation, with the humble dwellings, and simple lives, of the private citizens. It is here, in this noble republican pride, ever grasping futurity in its elated ideas, we see the lofty character, the generous disinterested genius of the free state, in all its productions. This was the case, in an eminent degree, with respect to the Athenian republic. She expended, on the most solid and magnificent public structures, on the theatrical exhibitions, on unrivalled productions of the poetic art, on pictures and statues, immense sums. This she was enabled to do, by the rich treasures which flowed into her from various quarters; the vast wealth, which had been brought from the
treasury

treasury of Delos; the trade with the colonies; the produce of the gold mines on the Thracian Chersonesus.

Under Tiberius, the ædiles proposed, in the senate, to re-establish the sumptuary laws. The emperor opposed it: well knowing that such regulations were connected with the republican spirit. He did not, however, express his motive. “ We were frugal, (said the emperor,) while we
“ were masters only of one city: now, we consume the
“ riches of the whole globe, and employ both the masters
“ and their slaves, in our service.” When a proposal was made, under the same emperor, to prohibit the governors of provinces from carrying their wives with them, on account of the dissoluteness and irregularity, which followed those ladies, the proposal was rejected. “ It was said,
“ that the examples of ancient austerity were changed
“ into a more agreeable manner of living.”

“ The spirit of moderation, (says Montesquieu,) is what
“ we call virtue in an aristocracy. It supplies the place
“ of the love of equality in a popular state. Modesty,
“ and simplicity of manners, constitute the strength of an
“ aristocratic nobility. When they affect no distinction,
“ when they mix with the people, dress like them, and
“ share their pleasures, the multitude begin to forget their
“ subjection. The laws (adds he) should forbid all kind
“ of commerce to the nobles; otherwise they would monopolize the whole to themselves. Commerce should be
“ the employment of the people. The golden chain, which

was

“ was displayed at Venice, on stated days, was calculated
 “ to flatter the feelings of the people, to reconcile them
 “ to the government, and persuade them, that every thing
 “ was managed for their advantage. The riches, which
 “ were thus exhibited, were understood to be the riches
 “ of the state.”

This spirit of moderation, in an aristocracy, has the same effect, to many purposes, as the spirit of equality in a democracy. It gives the mass of the people some idea of their own importance; and thus contributes to produce that elevation of mind, and grandeur of sentiments, which are the parents of excellence in all the nobler branches of art. It tends to generate a love of country, which disposes men of talents to continue and reside on the parent spot, even under some disadvantages, rather than to emigrate in search of better fortunes; and engages them to exert their talents, to embellish the place which gave them birth, with the monuments of genius. The spirit of moderation, like the spirit of equality, requires a spirit of frugality, and sumptuary restraints, which preclude gross and sensual indulgences; and, as a resource and substitute, lead men to more elegant and refined gratifications, such as the *fine arts* bestow. The spirit of frugality, by retrenching expense, in the sensual enjoyments, hoards the means and funds, not only of the state, but the individual; and reserves a greater mass of wealth, to be employed in the encouragement of those arts, and the completion of works of magnificence. In support of this opinion, let us recur

to history, and see the progress of the *fine arts*, the surprising monuments of art, genius, and magnificence, which have adorned the modern aristocratic republics of Italy; as Venice, Genoa, Florence, and Pisa: not to speak of ancient Rome, which, in its best and purest times, was aristocratic. How vast and noble were they! what elevation of talent do they exhibit! how much do they seem, at this day, to surpass the strength and revenues of states so very limited in extent! The pomp and splendor of their palaces and public buildings; their excellent poetical productions; the share they bore, in the revival of letters; must be ascribed to the influence of freedom. Criticism was honoured and respected: a multitude of learned editors, as Vellutello, Landino, Victorius, Aldus, arose: translations of most of the ancient classics were made; which are now known by the name of Collana, from the complete series they form: the ancients were examined, as models of sublimity and beauty: the modern Italian language sprung out of barbarism: rhetoric, philosophy, and poetry flourished: Petrarch gave to Italian poetry, an elegance, and softness, a grace, which is inimitable; to this he added the charms of modesty and virtue.

We proceed to consider the influence of a limited monarchy on the *fine arts*. Monarchy is favourable to many of them, and to the manufactures connected with them; to those, especially, which are subservient to luxury and pleasure. Monarchs maintain a splendid establishment, state and magnificence. They are led, both by inclination
and

and policy, to diffuse a love of expense and parade, a taste for luxury, festivity and pleasurable indulgence, among their nobles and courtiers. By this means, they endeavour to increase the influence of the crown, by rendering its favours of more value. While they involve their nobles in debt, to render them dependent; they try to exhilarate their minds, to make them forget their complaints and grievances, and forego their rights and claims. By engaging them in frivolous amusements, and attaching them to pleasures, they banish the thoughts of ambition, and all care of rising in the state, except through the favour of the court and the sovereign. The spirit of dissipation, gallantry and amusement, diverts the attention of the powerful subjects, dispels gloomy and malign thoughts, and dissipates ambitious projects, which might threaten the repose of government. The court, and seat of power, being rendered agreeable, by the various pleasures they afford, and the splendor they exhibit: a race of powerful and haughty nobles are allured to a distance, from their strong and ancient castles; where, surrounded by numerous bands of their warlike and faithful retainers and dependants, they were used to resist the will, and despise the resentment of their sovereign: they are led to commit their persons into the hands of the monarch, in a state like that of hostages. It is said, that the court of Vienna* practises this policy at present, to ensure the dependency

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of

* See Townson's Travels in Hungary.

of Hungary, of whose inhabitants it is extremely jealous; because the people anciently had formidable and extensive rights, and a great liberty; and still have retained a fond remembrance of them, and shewed a disposition to claim and assert them. The nobles have vast possessions; and a power, which, if they acted in unison, might prove fatal to their connexion with Austria. It, therefore, has studiously endeavoured at accomplishing the ruin and subjection of the Hungarian nobility; by attracting them to court, and implicating them in heavy expenses. *Henry the Third endeavoured to practise the same artifice, with respect to the French nobility of his time; and to engage them, by his example, in frivolous pursuits, and inordinate pleasures. He fell the victim of his own artifice. His vigour was relaxed, his understanding clouded; he sunk into a premature debility, and impotence of mind and body; while, at last, he pursued that from inclination, which, at first, he practised from policy.

The spirit, which thus originates in the sovereign, and those immediately about him, is diffused through the nation; affects every individual with the poison of luxury, and disposes the people to expense in clothes, equipages, furniture, the pleasures of the table and amusements. Hence, an universal patronage will be afforded to all the arts, which minister to luxury and amusement; to various manufactures, which produce elegant superfluities, and
flatter

* See Hume's History of England, and Davila, Guerre Civile di Francia.

flatter the artificial wants. The love of pleasure will demand, the disposition to expense will remunerate exertions, in various branches of the *fine arts*, as subservient to manufactures, as contributing to the accommodation and gratifications of luxurious men, as furnishing or improving the means and modes of amusement. Such are painting, sculpture, architecture, music, and certain branches of poetry, particularly the drama. Love and gallantry will prevail, and supply subjects, while they afford encouragement to other branches of poetry. The poet will thrive, and be at ease, under the patronage of a splendid and opulent court. The free and pleasurable intercourse of the sexes will continually furnish new occasions of resorting to the muse, and new incitements to excellence. “As riches, (says Montesquieu,*) by the very constitution of monarchy, are unequally divided, there is an absolute necessity for luxury: were the rich not to be lavish, the poor would starve. It is even necessary here, that the expenses of the opulent should be in proportion to the inequality of fortune; and that luxury should encrease in proportion, and grow more and more extensive, as it arises from the labourer to the artisan, the merchant, the magistrate, the nobility, to the great officers of the state, to the very prince: otherwise, the nation is undone.” The republic and monarchy both encourage the *fine arts*: the republic, in the spirit of parsimony; the monarchy, in the spirit

* Spirit of Laws, Book VII. chap. iv. Eng. Trans.

spirit of luxury: the republic, in the spirit of public magnificence; the monarchy, in that of private expense: the republic, by the elevation of mind, and the correctness of taste, to which it gives birth; the monarchy, by the love of pleasure, which it encourages: the republic uses the *fine arts* as means of ambition, and engines of government; the monarchy, as ministers of those indulgences, and pleasurable enjoyments, which it is its policy to promote. The *fine arts*, which are respectively cultivated, in a republic and monarchy, have always differed, in conformity with the different character and principle of the two governments. The first are more noble, severe, and exalted; the others more light, graceful, and pleasurable: the first, connected with action, serious occupation, and the administration of public affairs; the other, resting in mere amusement, and much connected with the gratification of the senses.*

It

* The kingly government of the Jews may be considered as a limited monarchy; being governed, partly by the code of the Mosaic law, and partly by the great power and credit of the hierarchy. The reign of Solomon, which was long and glorious, may be regarded as the Augustan age of the Hebrews: and what we know of it may serve to shew the connexion between the political state of the country, and the progress of the *fine arts*. The prosperity of the Jewish nation, at this period, not only enabled them to cultivate the arts and sciences, but induced foreigners to visit and assist them. Instances of this we find, in what is related respecting the Queen of Sheba, and Hiram, King of Tyre. As the Romans, in the time of Augustus, and his successors, were indebted to the Greeks, for a great part of their knowledge in the polite arts; so the Hebrews, under Solomon, had assistance from Egypt, and from Tyre. As to music and poetry, which seem to have been put on so respectable a footing, in the former reign, they appear to have had

It is under the mild atmosphere of limited monarchs, where a variety of arts and professions exists, and, at the same time, there is a great number of idle and dissipated people; where the free sallies of humour and ridicule are not only tolerated, but favoured, as sources of amusement; where luxury, idleness, and the desire of pleasure, dispose men to intrigue, and to an indulgence of all their whims and propensities; that the comic muse fixes her abode. The free and sportive character of society and conversation, the intercourse of the sexes, the volatile and frivolous character and pursuits, which courts and their retainers produce, and the free display of all the vanities and humours of men, furnish abundant materials for comedy; while a splendid and well-frequented theatre, which is always among the pleasurable establishments of a free monarchy, encourages and rewards the display of her powers.

It seems, then, that, if all other circumstances are equal, a mixed monarchy should be favourable to more branches of the *fine arts*, and produce greater perfection in them,
 than

had their share of attraction in that of Solomon. In Ecclesiastes, he speaks of music among the vain luxuries, and vexations of spirit, with which he found himself satiated: "I got men singers, and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all sorts." The poetical parts of the Old Testament are sufficient to convince us, that poetry was carried to a very high pitch of perfection, among the ancient Hebrews. The description of the magnificence of Solomon, particularly of the structure of the temple, and its embellishments and furniture, may convince us, that they had carried architecture to an equal pitch of excellence.

than any other form of government; since it will unite the elevation of mind of the republic, with the pleasurable disposition, the varied characters, and free expense of the monarchy. We have seen, that a monarchy is favourable to the comic and satyric poet. Eloquence also flourishes in mixed monarchies, where deliberation is admitted: and assemblies, discussing the political interests of the state, though not absolutely popular, are sufficiently large to give the popular form, to afford a theatre for the display of oratory, and incitements to excel, that may call out exertion, by a numerous audience, and the idea of a public exhibition. There was no eloquence in the Roman senate, after the accession of the emperor. Yet, even in the parliament of Paris, bold and sublime strains of energetic elocution were not unusual; as, when a member fell on his knees, and invoked the spirit of St. Lewis. The English senate is a great school of oratory, a grand theatre for the exhibition of eloquence: the subjects of debate are so important: the persons, who engage in them, are selected from such various classes of society; the deliberations are so free and public!

The English government, being a mixture of various forms, it should be most favourable to the progress of the *fine arts*; as comprizing, in itself, all that is most favourable in each, to their advancement. It has popular assemblies, to promote, nay, to render necessary, the study and advancement of eloquence. There is so much of the democratic

mocratic form, and the people, on the principle of representation, have such a share in the government, such an importance in the state, and are impressed with such a sense of their own dignity, that it produces an independent spirit, and an elevation of mind; while the splendor of an imperial court diffuses the love of pleasure, and the opulence of the merchant joins with the pomp and expense of a wealthy nobility, to supply an ample encouragement to all the arts, that minister to luxury, pleasure and magnificence.

When the great duke of Florence, Cosmo, prevailed in his schemes of ambition, and, under the affected simplicity of manners, and affectation of a love of equality, rendered himself master of his country; we are not to argue with respect to a monarchy, nor yet with respect to a republic, from what then took place at Florence. Though, nominally, there was a republic; yet, in reality, a monarchy was established: and, though single domination was established, a strong free spirit remained. Hence we shall find, in the admirable works of art and literature, which Florence produced, something mixed, something that savours of the expense and magnificence of a monarchy, and, at the same time, breathes the free and elated spirit, and shews the noble and independent sentiments, peculiar to a republic.

I shall conclude this part of my Essay by observing, that, as in various departments of nature and art, extremes are found to meet; so it is, with respect to the influence

of the political circumstances of countries, on the progress and prosperity of the *fine arts*. The extremes of despotism and anarchy operate alike: the one, by a jealous gloomy control, uniformly acting; the other, by occasional licentiousness, and bursts of popular fury, more sensibly violent and tremendous. These aggressions on personal safety, property, freedom of speech, and superiority of talent, so cruelly inimical to the *fine arts*, proceed, in both cases, from the same cause; from a sense of weakness, from an apprehension of hostility, arising out of the consciousness of deserving to have foes. Both governments, (if they deserve the name,) endeavour by the same means, (namely, by terror) to obtain the same end, self-preservation: both are equally prodigal of blood, equally destructive of human nature and human happiness; of all that contributes to embellish the former, and promote the latter.

I proceed to consider the difference of climate. The varieties of climate affect the *fine arts*: directly, by their influencing the temperament, disposition, national character, and intercourse of society; and indirectly, by their predisposing men, to concur or acquiesce in the establishment of certain forms of government.

As climates are distinguished* by degrees of latitude, so are they, also, by those of sensibility. The different effects of the same pieces and performances, on an English and Italian audience, are surprising. This difference of sensibility must have a striking effect on the growth and progress of the *fine arts*. Of course, the varieties of climate

* Montesquieu.

mate must be more or less favourable to them. Where there is most sensibility, the *fine arts*, if the operation of that sensibility is not controlled, by the operation of other causes, which are unfavourable, must be most prevalent and prosperous. It is true, that political institutions may, and often do, control and counteract the softening effects of climate. Thus the severe and uniform manners and discipline of the Spartan republic, inculcating an inflexible sternness of nature, and proscribing pleasure, relaxation and soft indulgences, must have been unfavourable to the *fine arts*. In the North are people, who have few vices, many virtues. In northern climates, scarce has the animal part of love a power of making itself felt (says Montesquieu).* “ In temperate climates, love is attended by a thousand circumstances, and endeavours to please, by things that have the appearance, though not the reality of this passion. In warmer climates, love is liked for its own sake: it is the only cause of happiness; it is life itself.” In southern climates, the machine, of a delicate frame, but strong sensibility, resigns itself to love. In the northern regions, a machine robust and heavy, finds pleasure in whatever is apt to throw the spirits into motion; as hunting, and other athletic exercises. The general love of music in Italy, the unrivalled excellence in painting, the extraordinary faculty of the *Improvisatori*, are proofs of the superior sensibility of

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* See Spirit of Laws, B. XIV. c. ii. Nugent's Translation, V. I. p. 327, et sequentes.

the Italians. In fact, the rapid and unstudied effusions of the *Improvvisatori*, are proofs, rather of superior sensibility, than of poetical talent. It appears that haste, an absence of thought, and exclusion of preparation, seem necessary to the exercise of this faculty. It seems to have an intimate and inseparable connexion with music. The extemporaneous effusion is usually some address to the company, or allusion to some local or occasional circumstance; or a descant on a string of similies, suggested at the moment. It is not merely recited, but sung out to some tune, with much vehemence; and the musical air always seems to suggest the lines.* As their climate is yet more genial, the sensibility of the Greeks surpasses even that of the Italians. It formerly produced pre-eminence in all the *fine arts*: a pre-eminence which the Greeks might still maintain, if the influence of a most happy climate, and the capabilities of their natural endowments and talents, were seconded by the enjoyment of freedom, and the influence of a rational and patriotic government. Modern travellers speak in high terms,† of the amiable manners, the gay temper, and lively genius of the Greeks, at this day, sunk as they are in deplorable ignorance, and prostrated under the iron rod of a barbarous and unrelenting despotism.

The penances of the Indians, so full of barbarity, the heroism of the women of Malabar, who burn themselves

* Such was the character of the recitations of Signor Negri.

† See Guy's Sentimental Journey in Greece, Abbe Mariti, Sonnini, Olivier, &c.

selves with their husbands, form no objection to what has been said, about the great sensibility of the natives of warm climates. This sensibility, though it makes them fear death, makes them fear other things even worse than death. This degree of sensibility made them early arrive at a proficiency in the arts of music and poetry, which the delicacy of their organs enabled them to practise in the greatest perfection. This refinement of their organs made them receive strong impressions from surrounding objects: hence they excelled in music, of which they have a vast number of modes or measures; and sublime strains of descriptive and figurative poetry. It disposed them to the love of pleasure, and made all their passions violent in the extreme;* hence the platonism of their love poetry; the ardour, the delirium, with which they describe the intoxicating sentiments of love; and the strange mysticism of their religious poetry.†

The influence of climate, on the arts and pursuits of a people, may be seen, in what ancient writers tell us of the music, the poetry, and other literary compositions of the ancient Greeks of Asia Minor. Nothing could be more relaxing and seductive than the climate: the very air seemed to diffuse the spirit of sensuality, pleasurable indulgence, and libertinism. The Lydian mode of music was remarkable, for its effeminacy and fascinating power:

love

* Even their religious poems adopt the tone of love.

† Sir William Jones's Works, Vol. I. "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus."

love and poetry were the progeny of this soft climate. The Milesian fables, the prototype of the modern novel, were the productions of Ionia, celebrated for its opulence, its commerce, the number of its colonies on the borders of the Propontis, the Tanais, and the Nile; and not less celebrated for the effeminacy of its inhabitants. In this province, where the Meander winds through a most delicious country; where groves of myrtle, the almond, sweet willow, and the orange, perfume the air; all nature inspires the most voluptuous sensations. Here the Milesian tales originated; and Aristides, who distinguished himself in these compositions, according to Plutarch, must have written before the time of Crassus: for, after his defeat, a copy of these fables was found in the baggage of a Roman officer, and brought to Surena. The warlike Parthians despised a nation, which, in the midst of its military pursuits, could give itself up to such amusements.

The influence of climate, and the love of pleasure, may have encouraged the various branches of the *fine arts*, that are connected with the pleasures of sense, and minister to luxury. This, in some degree, served to counteract the tendency of arbitrary power to discourage arts and sciences. Thus we find, that the delightful regions of Asia Minor were ever the favourite seats of love and poetry; where the son of Bacchus and Venus was peculiarly worshipped; and the voluptuous spirit of the climate breathed through its poetry. While the political state of the country precluded the sublimer efforts of poetry, the epos, and the
drama,

drama, and the rousing and animated strains of a masculine eloquence, it relaxed the mind into indolence and soft indulgence: it produced the Lydian measure of music, effeminate and voluptuous in the extreme: it produced a race of amorous poets, who celebrated love, the prevailing sentiment of the country, with all the truth of nature, and all the embellishments of fancy. Thus were the chains of the people so entwined in myrtle and flowers, that they were concealed from view, and scarcely prest on the limbs that bore them.

Climate may influence the *fine arts*, in a less direct manner, by predisposing men to receive certain forms of government; and contributing, in other respects, to their establishment. The East, the original seat of patriarchal authority, seems to have been, at all times, the chosen residence, and head quarters, of arbitrary power. Montesquieu endeavours, with much ingenuity, to explain the cause. “ In Asia, countries, which are very cold, border
 “ on others, which are very hot; as Turkey, Persia, India,
 “ and Japan.* In Europe, on the contrary, the temperate
 “ zone is very extensive, though situated in limits very
 “ different from each other; there being no affinity between
 “ the climates of Spain and Italy, and those of Denmark
 “ and Sweden. But, as the climate grows insensibly colder,
 “ on our proceeding from south to north, according to the
 “ latitude of each country, it follows, that each resembles,
 “ in point of climate, the country adjoining; that there is
 “ no

* See Spirit of Laws, B. XVII. c. iii. Nugent's Translation, Vol. I. p. 393.

“ no very extraordinary difference between them; and that,
 “ as I have just said, the temperate zone is very extensive.
 “ Hence it comes, that, in Asia, the strong nations are op-
 “ posed to the weak. The warlike, brave, and active peo-
 “ ple, touch immediately on the indolent and timorous: the
 “ one, therefore, must conquer; the other, be conquered.
 “ In Europe, on the contrary, strong nations are opposed
 “ to strong; and those, who join each other, have nearly
 “ the same courage. This is the grand reason of the
 “ weakness of Asia, and the strength of Europe; of the
 “ liberty of Europe, and the slavery of Asia. That liberty
 “ in Asia never increases: in Europe, it is enlarged or di-
 “ minished, according to circumstances.* The nations, in
 “ the north of Europe, conquered as freemen: the nations,
 “ of the north of Asia, conquered as slaves, to satisfy the
 “ ambition of a master: such are the Moguls, the Afghans,
 “ and the people of China and Tartary. The genius of
 “ the Getic or Tartarian nation, has ever resembled that
 “ of Asia; the whip is every thing. The Tartars diffuse
 “ slavery; the Goths freedom. Asia has much larger plains:
 “ it is cut into much more extensive divisions, by moun-
 “ tains and seas; and, as it lies more to the south, its
 “ springs are more easily dried up. The mountains are
 “ less covered with snow; and the rivers, not being so
 “ large, form less powerful barriers. Power, in Asia, must
 “ be despotic; else there would be a division, inconsis-
 “ tent with the nature of the country. In Europe, the
 “ natural

* Spirit of Laws, B. XVII. c. v. Nugent's Translation, V. I. p. 395, et seq.

“ natural division forms many nations of a moderate ex-
 “ tent. The North of Europe has been called, the forge
 “ of the human race. In Asia, they have always had great
 “ empires: in Europe, they could never be established.
 “ Here observe (by the way) the effect of a country being
 “ divided into a number of small states; as ancient Greece
 “ for instance, ancient Italy, modern Italy, Germany, and
 “ the rest of Europe, at this day; with respect to the en-
 “ couragement of commerce, letters, and arts. In Europe,
 “ the ruling by laws is not incompatible with the main-
 “ tenance of the state, but favourable to its continuance.
 “ It is this, which has formed a genius for liberty; which
 “ has rendered every part difficult to be subdued by fo-
 “ reign powers. On the contrary, in Asia, a servile spirit
 “ has uniformly reigned.”

“ On the very principle on which slavery prevailed, ge-
 “ nerally, in Asia, it will be seen, why Egypt, if we
 “ are to call it part of Asia, Egypt long formed an ex-
 “ ception to all that has been said, respecting the loca-
 “ lity of Asia. It is difficult of access almost on every
 “ part; affording great impediments to an invasion, and
 “ powerful means of defence against a foreign enemy. On
 “ the side of the Mediterranean sea is a very small line
 “ of coast, in proportion to the general extent and impor-
 “ tance of the country, and this is very difficult of ap-
 “ proach. At each mouth of the Nile are formidable whirl-
 “ pools and quicksands; on each flank of Egypt, it is de-
 “ fended by a dreadful desert of vast extent, where the
 VOL. X. 1 “ shifting

“ shifting sands threaten to overwhelm whole armies at once. Such are the effects of climate and geographical position.”*

The prevalence of religion may be considered as another political circumstance, which has a powerful share in promoting, or resisting the progress of *fine arts*. The influence of false religion, and the superstitious worship of images, in the time of ancient paganism, manifestly tended to bring the arts of sculpture and painting to perfection. The utmost magnificence of expense, and encouragement were employed, to render these symbols of the Deity, and the edifices in which they were placed, truly worthy of a divinity.† Thus artists were stimulated to display their abilities, in exhibiting the forms of the ancient heathen divinities in the sublimest manner; and in adorning their temples with pictures, sculptures, and other decorations. Poetry and music, in all ages, and all states of society, seem to have supplied a part of religious worship; and the natural enthusiasm of the bard received new inspirations from the feelings of religious fervor. Poetry, thus animated and exalted, supplied the pagan ritual with hymns, in honour of the Deity. Most of these devotional poems of the ancient heathens have perished, perhaps through the zeal of the first Christians: but (if we may judge from poetical history, or from the remains

* The author begs to be excused, for having extracted so largely from Montesquieu.

† Such were the temple and statue of the Olympian Jupiter, at Athens.

remains of Greek and Roman devotional poetry, which have happened to reach us) the compositions of classical times, on sacred subjects, were not inferior in merit, to the other ancient productions of the *fine arts*. The dithyrambics of Pindar are said to have been the noblest effusions of his genius; they were devotional hymns in honour of Bacchus. The hymns ascribed to Homer and Orpheus, and those of Callimachus, are preserved; and shew how much the spirit of devotion may elevate and adorn poetry. The same may be said of the *carmen seculare* and other odes of Horace. The ancient pagan mythology was singularly adapted to warm and captivate the imagination, by the wildness and variety of its fictions. The traditions and fables of paganism were, many of them, highly ingenious and beautiful: susceptible, at once, of an allegorical morality, and of all the charms and graces of poetic management. The descriptions of divinities and their attributes, and the rites by which they were adored, and the solemn addresses to them, which occur in the ancient epic, tragic and lyric poets, are among the noblest and most striking passages in their works. Among the wonderful remains of ancient art and magnificence, which are yet to be seen, in Egypt,* Greece,† Italy,‡ Palmyra,§ Persia, and even in India,|| and astonish the traveller; some, by

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* For the monuments of Egypt, see Bruce's Travels, Denon, and a work of great merit, Mayer's Views in Egypt.

† See Chandler's Travels, Stuart's Athens, &c.

‡ See Ruins of Pæstum, Piranesi, Overbeke, Stolberg's Travels.

§ See Ruins of Palmyra, by Wood.

|| See Chardin, &c. &c.

their sublime greatness, and stupendous dimensions; some, by their exquisite grace and beauty, their just proportions, the harmony of their parts, and the elaborate perfection with which they are finished; and others, again, by a combination of all these different attributes: many of the principal were edifices, erected for religious purposes. Indeed, in every period, and through every stage of society, religious enthusiasm has, occasionally, and often without directly intending it, been a promoter of the *fine arts*, (with the solitary exception of the Christian religion, at some particular periods, and in some particular sects.) Even the rudest ages had their idols: and the darkest and most savage rituals, even those, which streamed with the blood of human sacrifices, were not without their choral hymns and religious melodies.*

The first introduction of Christianity was, certainly, unfavourable to the *fine arts*.† The course of life, and education of many of the primitive teachers of the new doctrine, rendered them unfriendly to every species of elegance, pomp and refinement. Their religious notions, particularly their abhorrence of the idolatrous worship of the heathens, accompanied by an active zeal, led them to consider, as a most meritorious sacrifice to the true God, the destruction of heathen temples, and the graven images with which they were decorated. By this spirit, many of
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* See, in Asiatic Researches, and other books, an account of eastern monuments.

† The reader will find the influence of various forms of religion, on the manners and tastes of men, considered much at large, in an *Essay on the Effects of the Reformation*, by Villers.

the finest monuments of antiquity were destroyed; while the rage against images was carried even to a pitch of extravagance. When the new religion had extended its sway, and the Christian church grew wealthy, the hierarchy suffered political considerations to mingle with the concerns of faith. The ministers and votaries of religion began to feel the effects of pomp and decoration. Modern Christianity, like ancient paganism, sought to captivate the imagination, and excite superstitious veneration, by a powerful appeal to the senses. Thus the religion, which had gloried in the naked simplicity of its worship, and set itself in decided hostility to the splendid superstitions, and pompous ceremonial of paganism, adopted an imitation of all that it before decried. The idols of the heathens yielded to the crucifix, and images of the Virgin and saints: the walls of churches were covered with paintings and sculptures: the choirs resounded with vocal and instrumental music. Christianity, in her turn, became the patroness of the arts; and invoked their aid, to trick her out, in all the beauty of holiness, with gorgeous vestments, stately temples, statues, pictures, sculptures, solemn processions.* It is well known to every traveller,

* “ The Saxons, from the first introduction of Christianity among them, had made use of images: and perhaps Christianity, without some of those exterior ornaments, had not made so quick a progress among idolaters; but they had not paid any kind of worship or address to images; and this abuse never prevailed, among Christians, till it received the sanction of the second council of Nice.” Hume, Vol. I. end of chap. ii.

“ The

veller, how much of the labours of modern artists, since the revival of letters and the *fine arts*, in Europe, have been dedicated to religious structures and sacred subjects. But I shall find occasion to resume this topic. Let us now proceed, to consider the operation of certain grand historical events, on the *fine arts*.

It is observed, by the philosophical historian,* “ The rise, progress, perfection and decline of the arts and sciences, are curious objects of contemplation, and intimately connected with the narration of civil transactions. The events of no particular period can be accounted for, but by considering the degree of advancement men have made in these particulars. Those, who cast their eyes on the general relations of society, will find, that all the improvements of the human mind had reached nearly to their state of perfection, about the age of Augustus. There was a sensible decline from that period; and men, thenceforth, relapsed gradually into ignorance and barbarism. The unlimited extent of the Roman empire, the consequent despotism of the monarchs, extinguished all emulation, debased the generous spirits of men, and depressed

“ The more to facilitate the reception of Christianity, Pope Gregory (sur-named the Great) enjoined Augustine to remove the idols from the heathen altars, but not to destroy the altars themselves; because the people (he said) would be allured to frequent Christian worship, when they found it celebrated in a place which they were accustomed to revere as sacred. He also exhorted these missionaries to imitate the pagan festivals.” See Hume, Vol. I. chap. i.

* Hume, Hist. England, Vol. III. page 247, et seq.

“ depressed that noble flame, by which all the refined
 “ arts must be cherished and cultivated. The military
 “ government, which soon succeeded, rendered even the
 “ lives of men insecure and precarious, and proved de-
 “ structive to those vulgar and more necessary arts of
 “ agriculture, manufacture, and commerce; and, in the
 “ end, to the military art and genius itself; by which
 “ alone the immense fabric of the empire could be sup-
 “ ported. The irruption of the barbarous nations, which
 “ soon followed, overwhelmed all human knowledge, which
 “ was already far on its decline; and men sunk every age
 “ deeper into ignorance, stupidity, and superstition, till
 “ the light of ancient sciences and history had nearly suf-
 “ fered a total extinction in all the European nations.”

One of the most stupendous and dreadful historical
 events, with which we are acquainted, is the deplorable
 destruction of the Roman empire, by fierce barbarians.
 The confusion of all the orders of society, the erasure of
 all the arts of peace and elegance, all the institutions of
 civilized humanity, all the fairest inventions of human in-
 tellect and genius, from the face of the ravaged earth, was
 the consequence. To renovate the vigour of our degraded
 nature, it perhaps became necessary, that the arts of effe-
 minate and slothful luxury, together with the beings, who
 exercised and enjoyed them, should be swept away; and
 that the milder and more finished tribes of men, who were
 fated to disappear, to vanish, like a vapour or a dream,
 together with their inventions, their monuments, their arts,
 their

their habitations, and their sciences, should be replaced by a race of gloomy, joyless, and furious demons of extermination, ministers of human chastisement, whose only virtue was an unreflecting, ungoverned, and headlong valour; whose only joy was the calamity of their fellow-creatures, whose science was destruction. All the ingredients of human happiness and comfort were dashed to the ground. All the elements of civil society were confounded, in discord and anarchy, by swarms scarcely human; whose manners were as rude and barbarous as their language and their names. The world was immersed in a general chaos; and the *fine arts* were not only unknown, but forgotten.

Sic erat instabilis tellus, innabilis unda,
Lucis egens aer, nulli sua forma manebat,
Obstabatque aliis aliud.—OVID.

Such is the picture, which historians are fond of giving us, of the destruction of the Roman empire. However, it must be confest, that the irruptions of the Goths, the Vandals, and other barbarous swarms, which overspread the Roman provinces, did not destroy as much, as, at first glance, might have appeared. They found the people sinking fast into the barbarism of ignorance and depravity, through the effects of luxury and evil government: a barbarism more fatal, in spirit and essence, though less disgusting and terrific, in form, than that of their fierce and uncultivated conquerors. All love of fame, all true taste for the *fine arts*, all sense of right and wrong, were fled. It

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is true, that, in the miserable devastation which ensued, many noble cities were overthrown; many admirable works and monuments of antiquity were destroyed: but, on the whole, perhaps, society and the arts did not lose so much as is generally imagined; nor was the human race so much changed, for the worse, as we are too ready to allow. Let any person impartially read over the history of the latter ages of the Greek empire, and he will be obliged to confess, that the total extermination of such a degenerate and unworthy race, could not have been a subject of much just regret, or any great loss to the civilization and virtue of mankind. That vast and hateful capital, Constantinople, then was, and so it remains, a sink of abomination. The bloody intrigues, the relentless vengeance, the cruel punishments, the all-powerful sway of women and eunuchs, the unbridled domination of ignorance, fear, folly, avarice, lust, incapacity, and blindness, were just as great then, as they are at the present hour. Had not the human race, whose enormities were fully ripe for such a tremendous chastisement, been then overwhelmed by warlike barbarians, it is probable, that their own unmanly vices and degeneracy would ultimately have exterminated them, and depopulated the country; or, at least, plunged them in a degree of ignorance and blindness, equal to that which prevailed among their conquerors in the dark middle ages. Let the reader consult Gibbon, an historian worthy of the period he has chosen for his theme, with respect to the astonishing depravity and turpitude of the times. Any person,

who looks into the miserable productions* of those ages, may perceive, that taste and literature were then so debased, that they could not well fall lower; and that there is no real cause of regret for the loss of such false knowledge and base refinement. At this fatal period, from the east, and from the north, countless swarms of gloomy and ferocious barbarians, ignorant of every art, but that of desolation, poured over the Roman provinces: they swept away the monuments of former science and magnificence, the institutions and enjoyments of peaceful times.

In conformity with this political state of society, was the state of the arts; which seemed to be extinct, and swallowed up, in the vast abyss of general ruin. The memorial rhymes and incantations of the Druids; the bardic songs of the ancient Gauls and Britons; the hymns of the northern Scalders, often the harbingers of battles, sometimes the prelude to human sacrifices, and fraught with all the horrors of a gloomy and sanguinary mythology; cannot be considered as forming an exception to what has been said, respecting the absence of the *fine arts*, at this period. It is further to be observed, that whatever might be the science or talents of the Druids and bards, they
seem

* See the mob of Augustan historians; Ammianus Marcellinus, respectable in point of historic fidelity, detestable in point of stile; Ausonius, Prudentius, Juvencus, Sedulius, Nonnus, Quintus Calaber, Serenus, Sammonicus, Martianus Capella, &c. &c. &c. Claudian is a prodigy for his time: Dion Cassius, and Anna Comnena, are splendid exceptions: *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*.

seem to have been confined exclusively to these classes of people, who endeavoured to secure their ascendancy over the minds of men, by preserving to themselves a monopoly of the small portion of knowledge and accomplishments, which then existed.

“ There is an ultimate point of depression,” (says Hume,) “ as well as of exaltation, from which human affairs naturally return, in a contrary progress; and beyond which they seldom pass, either in their advancement or decline.” There is, in fact, in nature a constant and universal effort, and tendency to rectification. The tree, which is planted in a crooked position, endeavours to make itself upright. Out of the very obliquities, errors and vices of man, springs the endeavour to correct them. What happened, after the destruction of the Roman empire, illustrates fully this wise order of guiding providence. Out of the state of chaos we have described, arose, not a cure, but a palliative, the feudal system; the existence of which is a most signal fact in history. The feudal system, which began in the ninth century, continued in full vigour, to the middle of the twelfth. This system was perfectly military; out of it sprung the institution of chivalry, which is referred, by the best writers, to the eleventh century.* Romance was the offspring of chivalry. These three causes had a powerful influence, to generate the character and

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manners

* See St. Palaye, *Memoires de Chevalerie*, *Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions*, the preface to *Fabliaux e Contes*.

manners of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the spirit of love and adventure, so favourable, in many respects, to poetry, music, and even to other arts.*

The period in which the people of Christendom were the lowest sunk in ignorance, and, consequently, in disorders of every kind, may be fixed at the eleventh century, about the reign of William the Conqueror. From that æra, the sun of science beginning to re-ascend, threw out many gleams of light, which preceded the full morning, when letters were revived, in the fifteenth century. The Danes and other northern people, who had so long infested all the coasts, and even the inland parts of Europe, by their depredations, being settled in fertile regions, under milder climates, had now learned the arts of agriculture, found a settled subsistence at home, and were no longer tempted to desert their industry, in order to seek a precarious livelihood by the plunder of their neighbours. The feudal governments, also, among the southern nations, were reduced to a kind of system. And though that strange species of civil polity was ill fitted to ensure either liberty or tranquillity, it was preferable to the universal licence and disorder, which had every where preceded it.

In the course of the century or two, next from Charlemagne, almost the whole allodial property of Europe changed into feudal. Why and how this change took place,

* The first romances were the production of the twelfth century.

place, is particularly explained by Montesquieu.* In the barbarism of those times, there was no magistrate who possessed the power to bring criminals before him, or enforce his decisions. Luxury, greedy and expensive, though rude; and artificial wants, importunate and wasteful, in proportion as they were few in number; required and produced great inequality of property. Each petty chief regarded himself as the equal of his prince. In time of war, the power of the sovereign was considerable; in time of peace, it was nothing. As property became vested in few hands, the evil became enormous. The great feudal barons of Europe, despising the feeble authority of the sovereign, carried on private wars against each other. Such a state of society was not favourable to the progress of arts and refinements: and the existing arts, such as they were, all accorded with the state of society, and were subservient to the taste and pursuits of these turbulent and ferocious times. In the period, after the Norman conquest, architecture† was most diligently cultivated: but its style and destination were influenced by the political circumstances of the country. Partly, through the warlike spirit and insecurity of social life in general; partly, through the wealth

* See Spirit of Laws, B. XXXI. Chap. viii.; the title of which is, "in what manner allodial estates were changed into fiefs."

† From the estimation in which architecture began to be held, arose that extraordinary institution of free-masonry; at least, it gave name to the secret regulations, which were adopted, for the correspondence and mutual aid of strangers and pilgrims, in these times.

wealth of the church; architecture produced either fortresses, or churches and monasteries; but scarcely any other edifices, for public use or private accommodation. Thus we find, that the arts, under the feudal system, were in a rude and uncultivated state; and that all their productions were uncouth and barbarous, like the people for whose use and gratification they were intended. Architecture was of a rude and massy character; chiefly employed, as I have said, in the construction of castles, gloomy and inconvenient, but strong, and not ill calculated for purposes of defence, according to the imperfect military science of the times, where the baron revelled with his numerous retainers, or from whence he sallied forth, to spoil the surrounding country; or of churches, vast, dreary, disproportionate, damp and dark, affording a type and image of the cheerless and oppressive darkness, the gross fabrications, and dismal superstitions, which then prevailed over the world. Sculpture was little known; and as imperfect, in its conceptions and execution, as the architecture of the age. Poetry, if it deserved the name, had received as little improvement as the two former arts. The exercise of it was confined, almost exclusively, to the minstrels; and its object was merely the amusement of a race of rude uncultivated and savage warriors, in their hours of festivity. In conformity with the bigotry, ignorance and credulity of the times, the metrical productions of these rude ages were, either uncouth dramatic pieces, founded on stories taken from scripture, and called *mysteries*; or romances,

mances, which were originally sung at festivals, accompanied by musical instruments, and recounted the exploits of preceding warriors; or fabulous legends of giants, enchanters, spectres and fairies. From this state of chaos, into which the feudal system had degenerated, a new light seemed to expand itself, and illuminate all Europe. Among other monsters, to which the feudal system gave birth, was the universal prevalence of the judicial combats; when the appeal to the sword superseded all expedients, and the person accused for treason, rape or murder, threw down his gauntlet, and defied his accuser to mortal combat. In those days, when wickedness and impiety had arrived at the highest pitch, it was proposed, that the valour and generosity of individuals should form a supplement to the weakness of law. Combinations were then formed, to protect ecclesiastics, virgins, widows and orphans, and for redress of injuries in general. All the young men of family entered into these societies: hence, when it came to be patronized by the sovereigns of Europe, as well as the church, the order of chivalry arose. Towards the close of the eleventh century, Gregory VII. formed the idea of uniting all Christians against Mahometanism. It was then the wild and romantic enterprises of the Crusaders arose from chivalry. The early romances were the records of the adventures, arts, education, habits and manners of thinking, appropriate to chivalry. The *troubadours* and minstrels flourished in the ages of chivalry. In that age, admired poetical productions, or brilliant warlike exploits, were the only

only means, which could raise men of low birth* to the highest ranks in society. The *troubadours* and minstrels were almost as numerous as the castles of the great; and they were welcome guests, at the courts of every prince and baron. At this time, as an appendage of the system of chivalry, arose courts and parliaments of *love*. They were composed of a number of persons of both sexes, with a preference to the fair-sex. They decided questions of gallantry and love. Alice, third wife of Lewis the Young, held a court of love at Ticyes, in the latter end of the twelfth century, on a question, already determined by the Countess of Champagne, daughter of the same Lewis, by a former wife, which was referred to her, by way of appeal.

The French have a claim to priority, over all the nations of Europe, in the gallant institutions of chivalry, in the invention of romances, and in the production of all the various species and denominations of works of imagination. The Paladines, or peers of France, the puissant knights of Charlemagne, filled all Europe with their fame, and found a legendary historian of their fabulous exploits, in the supposed archbishop Turpin, whose work is a copious treasury of romantic subjects, and the parent source of romantic writings. From the peers of France, originated the

* Peter Vidal, a famous minstrel, was the son of an obscure tradesman. His fame, as a troubadour, gained him the favour of the highest characters, such as Richard I.

the Table Ronde, and the *British and Armoric knights of Arthur; which made such an early impression on the imagination of Milton, that he determined to make their achievements the subject of an epic poem, as he himself intimates.

———Arturumque, etiam sub Tevris bella moventem.

The French applied themselves, with incredible ardour, to the study of arms; to the attainment of perfection in the profession of chivalry; and to the laws and refinements of love and honour. Tilts, justs, and tournaments,† became their favourite amusement. They were passionately addicted to them; and celebrated them, with great splendour, pomp, and solemnity. Then arose all the train of *fancies chaste and noble*; all the heroic extravagances, imposing and magnificent follies, that grew out of the spirit of chivalry, and characterize the modern heroic ages. This spirit of chivalry was favourable, in a certain degree, to the arts. Painting and sculpture were encouraged, by the magnificence in dress and ornaments, which began to be studied and generally displayed; and by the devices, and other ornaments, which the knights now used on their armour. Music, too, was more prized and cultivated. It was employed in the military pageants, which were so

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much

* Begirt with British and Armoric knights.—Milton.

† These were distinct and different from each other.

much in fashion: it was employed by the minstrel, to enliven the feast and revel, which succeeded to the military pageants: it was employed by the gallant and enamoured knights, in the masques and serenades, with which they paid homage to their mistresses. The females, too, began to be sensible of their own value; to perceive, and be proud of the admiration which they excited; and to think themselves bound to deserve the adoration and attachment of their admirers, by suitable qualifications. They endeavoured, therefore, to secure the continuance of their empire, over the hearts of their lovers, by the embellishments of the mind, and the attainment of a variety of pleasing and elegant accomplishments. Among these, music and singing were not forgotten. We find, accordingly, in the early descriptions of charming and elegant females, that singing, and playing on the lute, are always mentioned. As to poetry, it evidently must have followed in the train of chivalry. That institution produced an elevation of sentiment, an ardent and generous love of fame, which led the great and powerful, who had the means of encouraging poetry, to prize and appreciate the exertions of the bard. The courteous and valiant knights loaded the poets of the time with favours: they made them the companions of their amusements and pleasures; the chroniclers of their loves and triumphs. They even endeavoured to imitate them, and join the bay to the myrtle and the laurel. Thus we find even Richard Cœur de Lion had cultivated the muses; and we have poetical remains of his composition.

The

The times of chivalry furnished the poet, in a pre-eminent degree, with two of the most copious and popular subjects of song, love and arms. Thus we see, in the influence which the institutions of chivalry had, on the progress of the *fine arts*, another instance, to shew how much these arts are dependent on the political state of the country.

The progress and prosperity of the *fine arts* are connected with a vigour of intellect, and elevation of sentiment: and we see that such events or institutions, as have contributed to produce an energetic frame of mind, contributed, in an equal degree, to the advancement of the *fine arts*. The corresponding energies of the mind dispose men to simultaneous exertions, in arts and arms; as if the elated spirit sought to extend its empire over every walk of excellence, and acquire sovereign mastery, and undisputed possession, in every apartment of the house of fame. Eschylus distinguished himself in the battle of Salamis; and, in his noble play of the *Persæ*, he has given a glorious description of that memorable engagement, in which his own valour shone conspicuous. Nor was this union of energies peculiar to an individual. The Athenian people displayed supreme excellence, in the *fine arts*, in all the most sublime productions of human genius, at the same time that they demonstrated superior energy of mind, and the unconquerable love of freedom, by leading the van of the Grecian host, that withstood the despotism of Persia. It was then, that Phidias conceived adequate ideas of the majesty of the gods, and expressed them faithfully in sculpture:

ture: and the painting of Panæus, in the portico, was accounted a full reward for the heroic exertions of Miltiades and his illustrious companions in arms!*

When the Romans had established the fame of their military prowess beyond dispute, and asserted their dominion over the world by the conquest of the Carthaginians and the Greeks, they saw that a province yet remained unconquered; and it was then that they aimed at an equal pre-eminence and dominion in the *fine arts*. When Greece yielded in arms, she made an ample reprisal in arts, and enslaved her fierce conqueror; and Rome fixed her mind and attention on a picture. In the succession of people who appeared, from the destruction of the Roman empire in

* In a country, not larger than some shires in England and Ireland, and within the compass of a short period, it is surprising what a number of illustrious men arose, in the various provinces of the *fine arts*. In dramatic poetry, Eschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, with many more, whose works have perished, were nearly cotemporaries: then succeeded the comic writers, Aristophanes, Menander, Philomen, and a cloud of others; of whom the reader may find some account, in the entertaining papers on the subject, in Cumberland's Observer: in history, eloquence, and philosophy, came Thucydides, Pericles, Demosthenes, Eschines, Lysias, Plato, and Xenophon: in sculpture, Phidias, Praxiteles, Thymilus: in painting, Panconus, Polygnotus, Micon, Pamphilus, Zeuxis, and Parrhasius. Nor are we left to conjecture, or the relations of ancient writers, for a sense of the excellence of this admirable people in architecture: the noble remains of ancient Athens, which have triumphed over the rage of time and barbarism, bear testimony to their superiority; and we must recollect that, at the same time, the Athenians carried on great and expensive wars, and contended, by sea and land, for the supreme dominion of Greece.

in the west, we may trace a perceptible difference, a gradual advance, in the merits of the succeeding race, over that which went before, both in energy of character, and in the arts: of the Danes over the Saxons; of the Normans over the Danes. The Danes passed through a long probation of hardy expedients and stern necessity, in their native woods: they brooded over the gloomy and gigantic conceptions, which elevated the savage mind: they formed their spirits in unison with the sublime and rugged scenery around them; which gave birth and nutriment to wild and lofty ideas, and served to ennoble and render interesting savage independence: they worshipped deities, which their own free and heroic imaginations created. The Normans command respect and admiration, more than the Danes and Saxons: they were a band of soldiers, who never fled before an enemy: they spread their warlike hosts through Italy, Sicily and England: they were every where feared, and looked upon as a superior race of men: their friendship was coveted, their enmity was deprecated. As there was a gradation in prowess, personal gallantry, warlike exploits and military fame, from the Saxons to the Danes, from the Danes to the Normans; there was a similar and proportionable difference and gradation, in their mental attainments, in the refinements of sentiment, in the knowledge of all the arts of life, and a relish for elegance and magnificence. We are told, by the historians of the dark ages, that the Saxons produced the most horrible desolations, wherever they came. This was, partly, owing
to

to their natural ferocity; partly, to the obstinate resistance of the Britons.* Thus the beautiful country, which the one struggled to conquer, the other to defend, was stripped of all its ornaments. When the Saxons obtained quiet possession of the finest provinces of Britain, by the extirpation of their ancient inhabitants, they were really a barbarous and miserable people, destitute of the most desirable accommodations, and of the arts by which they are procured; without models to imitate, or masters to teach them these arts. Thus were the arts, both useful and ornamental, in a very rude imperfect state. We find architecture† at the lowest ebb. Painting, for a reason which will be mentioned hereafter, seems to have been brought to a greater perfection, at this period, than many of the other arts. Poetry and poets were much admired, and treated with an high degree of respect.

The

* Gildas, who was an eye-witness of these scenes of devastation, paints them thus: "A fire was kindled, by the sacrilegious hand of the Saxons, which spread from city to city, and never ceased, till it had burned up the whole surface of the island, from sea to sea. The walls of all the colonies were beaten down, and their inhabitants were slain with the point of the sword. Nothing was to be seen, in the streets, but fragments of ruined walls, towers, and temples, fallen from their lofty seats, besprinkled with blood, and mixed with mangled carcases."

† See Henry's History of England. There does not seem to have been one church of stone, nor any artist who could build one, in all Scotland, at the beginning of the eighth century. And, in England, stone buildings were very rare, during the eighth and ninth centuries; and, where such buildings were erected, they were the objects of much admiration.

The Danes, who, for some time, were the predominant people of England, were of as bold and intrepid a spirit as the Saxons had ever been, and rather more fierce and warlike. By their numerous fleets, they rode triumphant in all the European seas, and carried terror and desolation to the coasts of Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Scotland and Ireland. They were pagans: and those divinities, who were the objects of their worship, had been famous heroes; whose favour, they imagined, could only be obtained, by brave exploits in war. Their admission into the hall of Odin, the father of slaughter, the god of fire and desolation, and all their future happiness, (they were taught,) depended on the violence of their own death,* and the number of enemies they had slain in battle. This belief inspired them with a contempt of life and thirst for blood.

*Inde ruendi in ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces
Mortis, et ignavum redituræ parcere vitæ.—LUCAN.*

Nor was their education less warlike than their religion. Born in fleets and camps. the first objects they beheld were arms, storms, battles and slaughter. Thus all that was terrible, by degrees, became familiar, and even delightful to them. Their childhood and dawn of youth were spent in running, leaping, climbing, swimming, wrestling,

* See the Song of Regner, Lobtrog, and the Accounts of the Poetry of Egil Skallagrim, a famous northern poet of those times.

ling, fighting, and such like exercises, as hardened both their souls and bodies, and disposed and fitted them for the toils of war. As soon as they began to lisp, they were taught to sing the exploits of their ancestors; and their memories were stored with tales of warlike expeditions. Their valour was boastful and audacious, attended with much presumption and self-confidence, and stimulated by the fondness for a violent death. They were cruel in war, but of a social and convivial disposition among themselves. The Danish soldiers, who were quartered upon the inhabitants, in the reigns of Edgar the Peaceable, and Ethelred, were the beaux of those times. They were particularly attentive to the dressing of their hair, which they combed, at least, once every day, and thereby captivated the affections of the English ladies.* The mountains of Germany, Sweden and Denmark, and even Iceland, were not unvisited by the muses. The chronicles of events among the natives were in rhyme;† and they advanced to battle with war-songs. The poems of the ancient bards of the North are said to have produced amazing effects on their hearers. ‡ Legends of the power of music are found, in the historians of those periods, similar and equal to what is related of the harps of Orpheus and Arion. Many of their metaphors were exceedingly bold and sublime.

* See Henry's History of England.

† Canute the Great and Alfred were poets and musicians.

‡ Venerable Bede (See Henry's History of England) gives a wonderful account of Cædmon, an ancient Saxon poet.

lime. Their language and expressions were glowing, and not unlike those of the Orientals or American savages. It appears they had great singularity, prodigious artifice, and almost endless variety, in the kinds and measures of their verses. Music was equally admired and cultivated: the halls of kings, princes and nobles, rung with the united melody of the voice and harp. Some skill in vocal and instrumental music seems to have been necessary to every man, who wished to mix in polite society; and the want of it was disgraceful.

The Normans surpassed the Saxons, and their own progenitors, the Danes, not in arms alone, but in policy, arts of life, and cultivation of all that was then held refined and beautiful. They gave the tone to the rest of Europe. They excelled in generosity of sentiment, in heroism, and in poetry. The first and favourite themes of romantic song, were produced by their story, by the deeds of Charlemagne and Roland.*

We also see how much the state of the *fine arts* is influenced by the political circumstances of a country, from the greater advancement which some of them make, the

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degree

* Jullifer, a soldier in the army of William the Conqueror, who first broke the ranks of the English at the battle of Hastings, is said to have advanced on that occasion, singing the song of Roland.

About the year 1100, a grand prose narrative, compiled in Latin, from the songs of Roland and Olivier, two of the principal peers of Charlemagne, was published, in the name of Turpin, archbishop of Rheims. He was followed by Geoffry of Monmouth, and by Robert Wace, who wrote *Brut d'Angleterre*.

degree of interest and attention which they excite, and the favour and encouragement which they attract to themselves, in preference to others, more conducive, perhaps, to the real comfort of life. It is thus that poetry and music came to be cultivated with enthusiasm, and some degree of success, among martial and rude people, while the other *fine arts* were little known or regarded. The reason was, these arts contributed to record their military exploits, and concurred to complete the entertainment of their moments of festivity. To shew the continued and harmonized correspondence, between the energy of character, and a proficiency in the *fine arts*, it is observed, that the productions of Chaucer, the great parent of English poetry, began to appear, at the time that the English arms triumphed in France: his Court of Love, it seems, being written in the year of the battle of Crecy.* At that time the spirit of chivalry was at the height, in England and France. The institution of the order of the Garter took place early in Chaucer's time. This spirit had incalculable effects on the general mind. It is to be ascribed to the spirit of chivalry, which then prevailed, and filled all Europe with exalted sentiments of love and honour, that the sentiments of Chaucer's lovers are so fine and delicate. The spirit of chivalry influenced the general state of society and manners. Chaucer was the chosen friend and companion of John of Gaunt, king of Castile.

Another

* It was in the year 1329, when the plague was raging in London.

Another great event was, the general establishment of the Christian religion, and the superstitions which were engrafted on it. At first, the spirit of superstition and bigotry contributed to keep the world in darkness, and deplorable ignorance; but, in process of time, the very institutions, which had most powerfully produced this effect, began to produce the very reverse of the picture. Such were monastic institutions, pilgrimages, the worship of images; all of which (though a contrary effect might have been expected) appear, to a certain degree, to have contributed to the revival and advancement of the *fine arts*, and even (unfriendly as they might be supposed to be to such an effect) to the advancement of solid learning. The erection of churches and monasteries was a great cause and incentive of the improvement of architecture. Painting and sculpture were, also, prized and cultivated; for the ornaments of these religious structures; for the images, shrines and sepulchres, and the furniture and utensils employed in them. Music was, likewise, studied and improved, as a solemn and grateful accessory, indeed, an indispensable requisite, in religious service. The first attempts at dramatic poetry, appeared in the miracle plays and mysteries. Monastic institutions also, (though in after times they became receptacles of sloth and ignorance,) yet, in the dark ages, contributed greatly to the improvement and instruction of mankind, and the cultivation of arts and sciences. The leisure, which the monks and other religious persons enjoyed, was dedicated to the pursuits of

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painting,

painting, sculpture and enamelling, and to music and poetry. Most of the persons, who excelled in those ages, in the *fine arts*, or became famous, by their writings, in history and poetry, were religious. It is the peculiar characteristic of the Roman Catholic religion, and some other sects of Christianity, that they address themselves much to the senses. The authors or improvers of these religious forms, were fully aware of the influence and force, which the senses possess over the hearts and characters of men. The buildings, which they constructed for public worship, were highly venerable. Their stained and painted windows, their massy pillars, the extensive aisles, the magnificence of the fabric, its concave roof, the splendid choir, were all calculated to inspire the mind with religious solemnity. To this were added the carvings, the painted images, and other decorations, the accompaniments of music, the uniform garb of the priests and nuns, their decent gestures, their slow and pompous processions, the solemn chaunt of the sublime anthem, the splendor of the altar, the brilliancy of the tapers, the smoke and fragrance of the incense. There was, in these early ages, an extreme scarcity of books; so that, in those times, seven hundred volumes were esteemed a foundation for a national library. The library of monasteries, however, in a great degree, supplied the disadvantage arising from the small collections of individuals; and many of the monks were constantly employed,

* Godwin's Life of Chaucer.

employed, in transcribing and multiplying copies of books. Many of these manuscripts they illuminated and embellished in a most beautiful manner, with miniature paintings and gilding.* By this means, the ecclesiastics disseminated an acquaintance with the classics and other books;† and also promoted arts and manufactures. Yet the degree of classical learning, thus circulated, bore the stamp of the barbarism of the times, and of the want of true taste. Rhyming Latin verses, and a puerile style in composition, with a fondness for trifling conceits, prevailed in poetry, such as it was; and the prose of those days was jejune and inflated, bombastic and barbarous.

The priests reflected deeply, in a spirit of cordial co-operation, on the best methods of swaying and governing the mind. Considering man, as the creature of sense, they addressed themselves most elaborately to his eye and his ear: they engrossed to themselves every thing that was most magnificent and awful, as far as they were able: and, not content with that, they even desired to become a source of amusement,‡ a sort of masters of the revels to the people. To this object they directed their shows, processions, and festivals. It appears, also, that they were jealous of the minstrels, whom they considered as rivals in their profession.

* See, in Coke upon Littleton, the extreme value which was set upon a book called the Grail.

† It must be confessed, however, they were chiefly employed in multiplying psalters and missals.

‡ See Warton's History of English Poetry, Godwin's Life of Chaucer.

sion. These views, of the different ecclesiastical bodies, were opposed and counteracted, (but in vain,) both by the hierarchy and the civil government, with a becoming zeal for religion, and a just sense of decorum. In the year 1258, an injunction was given by the Barons of England, that secular plays should not be permitted to be performed before the abbot and his monks; and *Ludi Theatrales* are forbidden to be performed in churches and church-yards: which shews, that the practice must have been pretty general.* It is not improbable, that mysteries and miracle plays were adopted, or at least brought into more general use, for the purpose of evading provisions and ordinances of this nature; by mixing something with the dramatic form, that was religious and scriptural. The monks, and other ecclesiastics, flattered themselves that they should be able, by this device, to elude the ordinances and decrees against profane stage plays and interludes; and, at the same time, to allure the populace. Nor should we ascribe it merely to policy and deep design, that the monks, and other ecclesiastics, insinuated themselves into all scenes of revelry which were going forward; and affected to take such a lead in the sports and amusements of the people. We are too fond of assigning abstruse

* We have various instances of dramatic performances, exhibited by religious bodies, of which the reader may find some enumeration, in Godwin's *Life of Chaucer*, Warton's *History of Poetry*, and other books of that kind. We are told, that the fourth general council of Lateran made a decree, prohibiting the clergy from attending secular plays.

struse political motives, for actions that are natural. It is not wonderful, that people, who were bred up in idleness, and had few means of filling the void of time, should eagerly catch at every species of amusement, which lay within their reach. In fact, there was no amusement, however puerile, coarse, and indecorous, which the monks thought they could enjoy without detection, to which they did not recur. The ancient sculptures, the works of monks for the most part, which are yet to be seen, in various places, shew the temper and character of the monks of this period. Instances of this may be seen, in the chapter-house of York, and in the halls of some of the chapels of Oxford. It appears, that, though the spirit and institutions of religion gave a certain degree of encouragement to the arts; the benefit, which they derived from thence, was but imperfect and limited. The monkish arbiters of elegance were gross in their tastes, and easily satisfied. Under their superintendence, the arts stopt half way in their progress to perfection. The spirit of ecclesiastical decoration produced works, vastly inferior to those which proceeded, at the same time, from rising taste, and rational magnificence, in the free states of Italy. Liberty was at least equally munificent with bigotry; but she proved a much more efficient and useful patroness. She enlarged the understanding, and refined the taste, both of the workman and the critic; while she extended rewards, to stimulate the exertions of the former. We are enabled to institute some comparison on this subject. The paintings

ings in *fresco*, on the walls of St. Stephen's* chapel, lately discovered, are quite fresh, though executed in the year 1348. They display a gross ignorance of anatomy, proportion, and perspective; and are very inferior to the paintings, which had appeared almost a century before in Italy.† Yet we must suppose them the work of the best artists England then afforded, stimulated to exertion by royal bounty,‡ and the spirit of religion. The patronage, which superstition afforded to refinement, and the imitative arts, was entirely relative, and the advantages derived from it local and temporary. The spirit of false religion, and priestly craft, produced advantages in a period of extreme grossness and barbarism. Thus, good grew out of evil; while the arts and policy, of the priests and monks, contributed to awaken and disseminate some little knowledge, and love of literature, and the *fine arts*, where they had been hitherto unknown. The effect of pilgrimages, to sacred places and shrines of saints, though they originated in gross superstition, was the civilization of mankind, and the advancement of arts. Men were thus led to a more extensive commerce with each other; and what began in bigotry ended in knowledge and politeness. They were forcibly

* Sacred plays are mentioned, by Mathew Paris, to have been acted in the year 1110, in the abbey of Dunstable: the author was Galfrid, a Norman, who was afterwards abbot of St. Albans.

† In the year 1276.

‡ They were executed by the orders of Edward III.: they represent the catastrophe of Job's family.

forcibly impelled to the acquisition of that knowledge, which is insensibly obtained, not only in human nature, but in the arts, by an observation of various countries, and of the manners and customs of various nations.

The grand source of improvement of Europe, in those early ages, was found in the Crusades, which brought the natives of the northern and western parts of Europe acquainted with the arts and civilization of the Grecian empire, and of the Saracen's, with the luxury and enjoyments of the people; and enabled them to refine the manners, the arts, and pleasures of their own countrymen, on their return. The Crusades too, by exciting a romantic spirit of adventure, and a generous readiness to sacrifice all other objects to the pursuits of honest fame, gave rise to a number of gallant acts and achievements, which furnished matter for heroic song; and also produced a certain high and romantic mood, an elevation of sentiment, extremely favourable to the cultivation of poetry and music, which are generally the pleasures of refined spirits. Though the Greek empire was much on the decline, these military adventurers had still an opportunity of observing a degree of splendor, a perfection and skill in commerce and agriculture, a display of politeness and of the *fine arts*, of architecture, sculpture, painting, poetry and music, such as they had never before witnessed, nor could possibly have conceived. And at that time, also, the Saracens were highly cultivated, and very forward in arts and politeness.

About the time that chivalry arose, or soon after, the mendicant orders arose also. St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assise were the founders, at the very same time, of the two great monastic orders of mendicant friars. The dignitaries of the universities were the chief opponents of these orders. The mendicants endeavoured to support their consequence, and gain adherents, by a superior degree of industry, learning and eloquence. Here was another political circumstance, which contributed to enlighten the public mind, and produced a rivalry and emulous exertion of talent. These two parties attacked each other with great animosity, and much ability was displayed on each side. The earliest opponents of the mendicant orders were, William de St. Amour, Joachim,* Abbot of Flora, in Calabria. John de Meun,† also, attacks the mendicants in verse, and gives a summary of the invectives of William de St. Amour. John of Parma was the great champion of these orders.

The kind of civilization and advancement in the arts, which flowed from a source remote, and appearing so little calculated to produce any good or ornamental effect, and rather adapted to cramp the energies of the human mind, to degrade its taste and feelings, and confine its pursuits, was still worthy of the source whence it sprung.

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* Who added to the usual monastic vows.

† John de Meun principally attacks them, on two grounds: their insinuating themselves into private houses, and seducing young persons and women; and their idleness.

It was a sluggish, a slovenly and half-begotten amphibious civilization, savouring much of the gross and vicious. It did not push forward, as might be expected, but remained stationary, or even became retrograde. The knowledge of the ancients was introduced, it is true; and the learned languages, particularly Latin, were in general use. But the classics then best known, and in the highest repute, were not of the purest style. Such a preference argued the rude and inferior taste of the times. The classics in greatest vogue, while the best authors were neglected, were, in poetry, Ovid, Lucan, Statius, Prudentius. The most admired prose writers were Seneca, Boethius, Macrobius and Valerius Maximus. Dictys and Dares: the *Gesta Romanorum* also of Guido de Colonna, the *Belium Trojanum* of Josephus Iscanus, the *Philippeid* of Guillaume le Breton, and the *Alexandreid* of Gaultier de Chatillon, were favourite works. The amusements of the times bore the stamp of grossness: rude rhymers, minstrels and mummers, jugglers, tumblers and posture-masters, were the delight of a rude people. Joinville (as quoted by Godwin) talks of the estimation in which they were held, and of their ingenious gibes and mockeries, and feats of *legerdemain*: Chaucer, also, alludes to their popularity.* The miracle plays or mysteries, of which a vast number are preserved, not only in English, but in other languages, particularly Italian, are monuments of the gross taste infused by the monks, these rude arbiters of elegance. The

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ceremonials

* Life of Chaucer, Vol. 1. p. 62

ceremonials and pageants of May-day, where *Robin Hood* was represented as lord of the May, with *Maid Marian*, his faithful mistress, as lady of the May; the feast of fools, and other similar pageants, were suited to the taste of the times, and seem to have had a sort of monastic quaintness, which plainly marked out their derivation from the convent. A lord of misrule was elected,* and a prelate of fools: all this was accompanied by a multitude of burlesque ceremonies. There was, also, the feast of *innocents*, and that of the *ass*. In the latter a wooden ass was exhibited, with a person enclosed, and attended by a crowd of mummers, representing six Jews, six Gentiles, of whom the poet Virgil was one, and some other personages. There was an oration in praise of the ass; and the whole assembly brayed like asses, as loud as they could. The utmost coarseness of manners, broad humour, and vulgar ribaldry, prevailed on these occasions.

What contributed, at first, to enlighten the world, and advance the progress of the *fine arts*, in a certain degree, and for a certain purpose, became afterwards the cause
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* When Queen Elizabeth was entertained by her favourite Leicester, at Kenelworth castle, the images of the ancient manners and amusements were revived; and mummeries, and the recitations of minstrels, made a large part of the amusement on this occasion. The mock heroic legend of the Tournament of Tottenham, much in the manner of the burlesque poem of the Orlandino, of Teofilo Folengo, a famous Macaronic writer, born in the year 1493, who published, sometimes under the name of Merlino Cocciaio, sometimes under that of Limerno Pitocco, was composed and recited by a personated minstrel.

of an effect directly contrary. When superior improvement became general, the gloomy and despotic empire of papal superstition had the most unfavourable effects on the state of society, and the destiny of the *fine arts*. The deplorable bondage in which it held the world, shackled the powers of the human intellect, and disseminated a taste, gross and uncouth, as those who then assumed the government of the consciences and understandings of men. By them some of the finest remains of antiquity were mutilated and defaced, in the pious rage of mistaken sanctity. Many of the invaluable treasures of Greek and Roman literature are supposed to have been obliterated, to make room for the disgusting legends of some miserable fanatic or maniac, dignified with the name of saint; or for the barbarous and despicable effusions of some monastic rhymer.* It is a certain fact, which appears from the writings of Petrarch and some other early authors, that many classical works, which had survived the irruption of the northern barbarians, were then in existence, and have since perished, through the want of taste and the ignorance of the subsequent ages; when monkish† indolence

* See the Life of Francis D'Assise.

† Every one, that has perused the ancient monkish writers, knows, that, however barbarous their own stile, they are full of allusions to the Latin classics, especially the poets. There seem also, in those middle ages, to have remained many ancient books, which are now lost: Malmesbury, who flourished in the reign of Henry I. and Stephen, quotes Livy's description of Cesar's passage
over

lence and barbarism plunged the world in a new darkness. False literature is even worse than ignorance, as it is worse to wander out of the way, than to remain still in one place. Then monkish rhymes, quibbles, false eloquence and barbarous conceits, prevailed together with gothic architecture. But, according to the perpetual balance which is kept up in human things, by the tendency which always urges and actuates the race of man to ameliorate their condition, evils always bring with them the source of their own correction. The tyranny of superstition was speedily felt, and men grew impatient under the yoke, and struggled to break their bonds. Here the very ignorance of the times, and the prevalence of superstition, began to furnish a new incentive and theme, to some, at least, of the *fine arts*; namely, poetry and eloquence. The Italian writers, about the thirteenth century, began to descant with freedom, on the corruptions of the church: the study of words gave place to that of things.

The philosophical discoveries of the Bishop of Spalatro began to expand the human mind: philosophy enlightened letters; letters ornamented philosophy; truth arose
on

over the Rubicon. Fitzstephen, who lived in the reign of Henry II., alludes to a passage in the larger history of Sallust. § It appears also, from the writings of Petrarch, that he was acquainted with some of the works of Cicero, which have since perished: it must have been through the ignorance and want of taste of the monks. We have an account, from some late travellers, of the gross ignorance of the monks of Patmos, and their disregard of the remains of antiquity which they possess.

§ See Hume's *History of England*, Vol. III. p. 249, and *Monthly Magazine*.

on the ruins of error. Even in England, where science and the arts had not made such advances as in other places, the minds of men began to be opened; they learned to enquire and reason.* The scandalous lives of the monks became the topic of invective, among the popular preachers, and rude satirists of the time. The same subject was mentioned, in that parliament, at the close of the reign of Edward III., which shewed such a disposition for innovation, under the pretext of reforming abuses. The idea was there started, and even discussed, of throwing aside the yoke of Rome. From the Arabians, the Italians imbibed their knowledge of the Aristotelian philosophy, and the spirit of free enquiry. This led, not only to an examination of abuses, and the detection of error, but even to scepticism and infidelity; which early appeared, in the writings of Cecco d'Ascoli, and Brunetto Latini, friends and intimates of Dante.† In England, Wickliff began to preach against the prevailing superstitions. The King, the Princess of Wales, and several of the greatest personages
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* Petrarca, and Richard of Bury, preceptor of Edward III. were the means of preserving some of the choicest remains of antiquity. Petrarca received the crown of laurel at Rome, April 8th, 1341. Two embassies came to him the same day, to offer him the crown; one from the university of Paris, the other from the senate of Rome. Robert, king of Naples, the most learned prince of his time, was appointed to examine the pretensions of Petrarch, who repaired to Naples for the purpose, and was received by the king with the utmost kindness.

† About this time was produced the book of the three impostors, Moses, Mahomet, J. C., ascribed to Petrus de Vincis, mentioned by Dante, Inf. Can. 13.

of the realm, were suspected of favouring the doctrines of Wickliff. John of Gaunt, and many of the ablest and most skilful courtiers, avowed themselves his abettors. Every pen was engaged in the dispute: the satirical and descriptive powers of poetry were called out, in this warfare: the followers of the old and new professions had their respective ballad-makers. Dr. Percy adverts to two ancient polemic dramas, *Every Man*, and *Lusty Juventus*. Many passages, in the *Inferno* of Dante Alighieri, as the reader will find, breathe the same spirit of bold invective, which prevails in that ancient English satirical poem, which is entitled *The Visions of Piers Plowman*, by Langeland.* The genius of free enquiry, which emancipated the mind from papal tyranny, gradually extended itself to the abuses of civil government, and created a general spirit of resistance to tyranny and oppression. This produced a general revolution in favour of freedom, and highly auspicious to the progress of knowledge and the *fine arts*. A more correct taste, a more acute and critical judgment, a more steady and regular march to learning, began to prevail. Eloquence, and the arts of composition, were now rendered necessary, by the frequency of attack and defence, among the polemical writers; and this, in time, produced a classical taste, and love of learning,† which became

* See *Inferno*, Canto XV. sta. xix. and xx.; and particularly the circle of Malebolge and gulf of Simony, Canto XIX. and Canto XXIII.

† Brunetto Latino, a Florentine, the preceptor of Dante, composed a *Tesoro* or *Encyclopedia*. There is a passage in it, relative to the magnetic needle,

became general. This was not, perhaps, the golden period of the arts; but it was, at least, the time when they were held in the highest honour. The study of them was prosecuted with the most eager assiduity; and they who excelled in them were received, by all those whom they would naturally desire to please, with an attention nearly bordering on adoration. In France, at this period, flourished the celebrated assemblage of poets, Ronsard, Baif, &c. &c., who gave strength and elegance to their vernacular tongue; and, in fact, made it a language, engrafting into it the beauties of the Greek and Roman speech. These were known by their cotemporaries, under the honourable appellation of the Pleiades; an appellation heretofore applied to the poets of Alexandria. At the same time, the art of painting began to be generally esteemed and patronized. The famous painter, Leonarde da Vinci, was honourably received at the court of France, and died in the arms of the first Francis. A famous event also, the discovery of the art of printing, now took place, and contributed, beyond all power of calculation, to the improvement of the world. The admirable remains of Greece and Rome now became familiar to every body, by the multi-

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needle, which serves to shew, that its virtues, in navigation, were known forty years before 1300, the year to which most modern philosophers refer its discovery. Brunetto seems to speak of it rather as a matter in general use, than as a new discovery. Guglielmo da Pastrengo, in the fourteenth century, composed the first *Bibliotheca Literaria* in alphabetical order.

plication of copies. A variety of learned men* arose, who employed themselves, with infinite application, to present the text of the classic authors to the world, in the purest form. The splendid court of Leo X., so much celebrated by cotemporary and all succeeding poets, extended its genial influence to the protection and advancement of the *fine arts*. At this time, also, the English taste began to be really refined and reformed, and the English language became regular and classical. The poetical dynasty, which had commenced in Chaucer, Lydgate, and Gower, was continued in splendor, in Sackville, Wiat, and Surry. Many of the first reformers were not only men of great learning and ability, but of a true classical taste, and elegance of mind. Erasmus, who was particularly severe on the corruptions of the monks,† and may, in some measure, be reckoned one of the reformers, excelled in learning, critical refinement, wit, and classical style. The art of painting was, at this time, much encouraged in England. Hans Holbein worked there, as well as other painters of eminence; a proof of the refinement of taste which had then taken place. The regular drama rose on the ruins of the miracle plays and mysteries.‡ The Italians, who excel so much in music at the present, were the earliest improvers
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* The Aldus family, including Paulus Manutius, and Asolas, some of the refugee Greeks, Calliergi, &c. &c.

† Erasmus, on some occasion, makes very free with the monks, whom he calls *cucullators*, *scortatores turpissimos*, *nebulones*.

‡ The first model of a regular tragedy was the *Gorboduc* of Sackville.

of that divine art. Modern music was rendered a science, reduced to principles, and has thence been furnished with its scale, its counterpoint,* its best melodies, its religious and secular dramas, and with the chief part of its grace and elegance. “ Italy, in modern times, (says Burney,†) has “ been to the rest of Europe, what Greece was to Rome. “ Its inhabitants have helped to civilize and polish their “ conquerors, and to enlighten the minds of those, whose “ superior prowess had frequently enslaved them.” When classical learning had begun to flourish in England, Erasmus visited that country; and Linacer, Sir John Cheke, and others, applied themselves with ardour to grammatical studies. Sir Thomas More wrote epigrams, and other poems, which have considerable merit; and was distinguished, as much for learning and elegance, as for integrity. Cardinal Wolsey, the powerful favourite of Henry VIII., while he had the confidence of his master, and full command over the treasure of the country, was a munificent and splendid patron of learning and the arts, of which he was an excellent judge. Erasmus graduated at Cambridge, and was professor of Greek at Oxford, in which station he was succeeded by Dr. Crook. The *adagies* of Erasmus are dedicated to Lord Montjoy; the king himself‡ distinguish-

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* Counterpoint is generally supposed to have been invented by Guido, a monk of Arezzo, about the year 1022.

† Hist. of Music, pref.

‡ Henry VIII.

ed him with marks of his particular favour and affection. Bishop Fisher had great zeal to promote literature in others, and to excel in it himself. Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, was an equal encourager of learning and learned men.* Erasmus calls him a great canonist, an able statesman, and a favourer of learned men. At this time, too, Polydore Virgil was patronized by Henry VIII., who gave him church preferments in England. Reuchlin, one of the early reformers, and the friend of Erasmus, was also one of the great restorers of letters in Germany. The learned Budeus, at this time, flourished in Paris, and was, likewise, the friend of Erasmus. As this last, by his bold and free censures of the monks, led the way to the Reformation, it has been remarked, that “ *Erasmus laid the egg, and Luther hatched it.*” Thus the action and re-action of genius and freedom promote each other, and energy of mind is favourable to the arts. It was not merely by the force of dry religious controversy, that the Reformation advanced. It availed itself of the exertions of oratory and the powers of invective, enlivened by wit and ridicule. Luther possessed uncommon genius, a lively imagination, a great share of learning, and, at the same time, sacrificed to the Graces. He composed some poems, both in Latin and German: he was fond of music, in which he was both a composer and performer. He said, “ it expelled melancholy, and put the devil to flight, who
“ mortally

* See Jortin's Life of Erasmus.

“ mortally hated music.” He even entertained a mean opinion of the capacity and disposition of those, who had no taste for this admirable art. Others of the reformers also, Eobanus Hessus, Ulricus Hutten, and Beatus Rhenanus, were men of distinguished taste and learning. Cardinal Sadolet, one of the first scholars of the age, highly esteemed both Melancthon and Bucer, noted reformers. The unguarded commendations, bestowed by Leo X. on Luther, occasioned great scandal.

The poetical history of the reign of Queen Elizabeth could not be comprised in a moderate volume. Epic, didactic and devotional poems, translations from the ancient and all the modern languages, pastorals, sonnets, madrigals, acrostics, humorous and romantic ballads, were produced, with a profusion, which, perhaps, has never since been equalled. No less than seventy-four poets are assigned to this period, in the new edition of the *Theatrum Poetarum*.* Many of these have been consigned to oblivion: a few, as Sir John Harrington, Sir Philip Sidney, Drayton, Fairfax, Warner, and Sir Walter Raleigh, continue to be cited, in deference to their ancient reputation. Shakespeare, Fletcher, Johnson, Spencer, and Sir John Davis, are still confessed to be unrivalled in their several styles of composition. After a lapse of nearly two centuries, during which the progress of literature has not been interrupted, the literary splendor of this reign is the boast
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* See Ellis, *Spec. ant. Poetry*, Vol. II. p. 129—30.

of English literature. This (as Mr. Wharton has justly remarked) may be ascribed to the Reformation. When the corruptions of popery had been abolished, the laity, who had now been taught to assert their natural privileges, became impatient of the old monopoly of knowledge. The general curiosity, heightened by ideas, either real or imaginary, of the treasures contained in the Greek and Roman writers, excited all persons, of leisure and fortune, to study the Classics. The marvellous progress of Queen Elizabeth, in the Greek nouns, is recorded with rapture, by her preceptor, Roger Ascham. He might have found many similar examples, in Anna Boleyn, Lady Jane Grey, the daughters of Sir Thomas More, and other distinguished characters. As the stores of Greek, Roman, and Italian literature, were now laid open, through the medium of translations, the former supplied our language with a variety of beautiful allusions: the latter afforded numberless stories, taken from common life, in which the variety of incident and ingenuity of contrivance were united.

It seems that the English language was, at this time, more copious, and better adapted for the purpose of poetry, than at any prior or subsequent period. Our vocabulary was enriched, during the first half of the sixteenth century, by almost daily adoptions from the Greek, Latin, Italian, French and Spanish languages: not to speak of the oriental tongues, which furnished liberal contributions of words, and still more liberal of figures and phrases; particularly when the scriptures came to be generally studied,

died, and were translated into the vernacular language. Though some of these denizens were admitted without necessity, and only through a blind veneration for the dignity of polysyllables; they added something to the expression, as well as to the harmony and variety of the language. A lively Italian writer* has made a remark, which, though singular, appears to be just; that the translation of the Bible is the test and standard of the language in England, while the standard in Italy is the Decameron of Boccaccio. The consequence of this, in England, was important. The vulgar tongue having become the vehicle of religion, was regarded, not only with national partiality, but with pious reverence. Even at this day, amidst the great improvements of our language, the old translation of the Bible is read with pleasure, and strikes us with its energy and beauty. This shews us, in the effects of the Reformation, how much the progress of the arts may depend on the political circumstances of the country.

I find, this historical induction has betrayed me into great prolixity; I shall therefore desist, and adduce, in confirmation of what I have already offered, two or three striking and unquestionable facts, from the general state and history of the *fine arts*, which strongly shew their dependance on the political circumstances of the country. The first fact is, that the English have no peculiar strains of national melody, like the Scotch, the Welsh, the Irish,
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* Algarotti.

the Swiss and the Calabrese. We find none of these airs of traditional music, wildly sweet, and simply pathetic, which speak so forcibly to the heart, and operate like magic on the imagination and affections of the people, with whom they are indigenous, to awaken the love of parent soil, and excite a fond association of ideas.* I can speak from experience: I have felt the powerful and inexpressible effect of the strains of national music; and found myself melted, to a degree of enthusiastic tenderness, by hearing some of our original Irish airs sung and played, even by very middling performers. I have seen many of the Scotch nation, particularly from the Highlands, most forcibly affected, by the strains of their native music. If the fact be, as I have supposed, that the English have no appropriate minstrelsy or indigenous melody, let us endeavour to account for this deficiency. The Scotch, Welsh and Irish, though the countries they inhabit have been much subject both to foreign aggression and intestine wars, yet retain more of the aboriginal inhabitants, and are, at this day, a less mixed race than the English. They have still, in some measure, retained in popular use their peculiar dialects, handed down to them from remote ages. They converse in their own languages with a conscious delight; and have preserved, together with their languages, many of their ancient customs, institutions;

* The powerful effects of the air, called *Ranz de Vache*, on the Swiss, while they were a people, were like enchantment.

stitutions, traditions and pastimes, and also many of their metrical compositions. Spencer* also, in his views of the state of Ireland, says, that the English colonists preferred the language of the natives to their own. Spencer, in speaking of the Irish, even in his time, says, "There is amongst
 " the Irish, a certain kind of people called *bardis*, which
 " are to them instead of poets: whose profession it is, to
 " set forth the praises or dispraises of men, in their poems
 " or *rithmes*; the which are had in so high regard and
 " estimation among them, that none dare displease them,
 " for fear to run into reproach through their offence, and
 " to be made infamous in the mouths of all men: for their
 " verses are taken up with a general applause, and sung
 " at all feasts and meetings, by certain other persons,
 " whose proper function that is; who receive for the same
 " great rewards and reputation amongst them."†

It is easy to account for this difference. The lofty mountains, the woods, defiles and morasses, by which Wales, Scotland and Ireland were defended, afforded natural fortresses, to which the ancient inhabitants retired, from the rage and pursuits of their enemies, and preserved their language and manners pure and unmixed. The progress of invasion was stopped, and some remnant of independence preserved. To this circumstance Ireland superadded a remote insular situation, which originally preserved her

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* He describes, in a striking manner, the pertinacity with which the Scotch, Welsh, and Irish, especially the latter, retain their own customs

† Spencer's Works, Vol. VI., small Edit, p. 124.

from the visitation of the Romans. England, on the contrary, which was better known, lay more open to invasion, and afforded fewer natural means of defence. It was therefore completely conquered, over and over again, and became, in succession, the prey of different races of invaders, who introduced their own language, manners, and institutions, and, in a great measure, metamorphosed the people whom they thus subjected; leaving them nothing, mental or corporeal, they could properly call their own. These again were, in turns, transformed by new conquerors. When the military science and discipline of the Romans prevailed, and drove the ancient Britons, to preserve an indigent and precarious independence, among the bleak mountains of Wales, Cornwall and Caledonia; the language, the manners, the garb, the habitations, pursuits and ideas of the people, became wholly Roman. Fair cities were erected: commerce flourished: all the arts of peace were understood and practised; and with them the luxury and softness of Rome was introduced, and every trace of Celtic origin disappeared. At the decline of the Roman empire, the extremities of that vast body were left defenceless, and became paralysed. Britain became the prey of the Saxons, who not only conquered but desolated the country; and, in the course of an obstinate and murderous contest, for the possession of the soil, obliterated every trace of Roman civilization, and introduced the Saxon language and Runic mythology. The Saxons, in their turn, began to acquire opulence, and to be softened

tened by the arts of peace. They then became objects of contempt and aggression, to a more fierce and northerly race of barbarians. The Danes prevailed for a season, and three sovereigns of that nation quietly possessed the English throne: this yet further destroyed the nationality of the people. After this, the Norman invaders, having possessed themselves of the country, endeavoured, as much as possible, to complete the subjection of the inhabitants. They changed the tenure by which lands were held; they introduced their own laws and language; and proscribed, with studious and unrelenting severity, the manners and customs of the Saxons. The Normans themselves had not been an aboriginal race; they were the descendants of northern adventurers, who had established themselves in France, in the same manner that the Saxons had settled in England. Thus we see, what a fluctuation of inhabitants, what a perpetual change of masters, took place in England. This will explain the cause of the fact I have stated; that the present inhabitants of England retain no national melody, and fewer national customs and traditions, than, perhaps, any other nation in Europe.

Another remarkable fact occurs in the history of poetry. It is observed by Algarotti, that Moliere (and we might say the same of some of our English comic writers) is as superior to Aristophanes, Terence and Plautus, as all modern tragic writers, Shakespeare excepted, are inferior to Sophocles and Euripides. The fact is undeniable, and the reason is, that the ancients were not provided with schools

of comic humour: whereas, every country, where good poets are to be found, furnishes a school of tragedy. The object of tragedy being to excite terror and pity, by the representation of great and calamitous events, the tragic muse finds her materials every where. The tragic poet requires no preliminary education: man is every where unhappy, and every where feels his misery. Hence more excellent writers have arisen in tragedy than in comedy.

The task of comedy is difficult: her excellence consists in the natural representation of manners and characters, not of the most perfect kind. The talent, by which the comic writer aims at eminence, in this department, is called humour: the subjects, on which it is employed, are, the foibles, the caprices, the lighter passions of men. It is obvious, that comedy can arrive at perfection, there only, where a plentiful crop of foibles, follies, and caprices arises: where all the various vanities, and eccentricities of human nature, are left free to expand themselves, and blossom without control; and the professions and pursuits of men are infinitely varied. I have already shewn, that, under a strict republic, the ramifications of character, and the display of follies and foibles, are repressed, by morals and virtue, the spirit of equality, and the cultivation of good order. The republican government endeavours to form a perfect character: comedy delights in that which is imperfect. Comedy requires a variety of characters: despotism produces a sameness of character, and stifles and overwhelms

overwhelms all the caprices and eccentricities of men, by the force of terror.

It has been observed, that the terms, used to express the products and efforts of eloquence, at Athens and Rome, mark the different genius of the people. The Greeks called regular harangues, *λογοι*, *discourses*; a word that marks operations of the intellect: and the use of this term seems to imply, that their harangues were addressed to the understanding, and sought to attain their end, by the powers of reasoning. The Romans called speeches of a similar kind, *orations*; a term taken from prayer, and including the idea of intercession, supplication, and an address to the passions. This is no fanciful or chimerical distinction. We find this difference of character fully exemplified, in the productions of Demosthenes and Cicero. The reason of this variation, in the style of public speaking, is to be found in the difference of political circumstances and national character. The Greeks were more lively, more ingenious, more spiritualized; their passions were all in arms, and ready at a call. The Romans were more steady, and less impassioned; and it required more application, and display of oratory, to rouse their feelings.

There is a fact, related in the annals of music, which shews the connexion between the arts, and the political state of a country. Many of the ancient writers, who visited Egypt, after it became a Roman province, speak of the inhabitants as the most melancholy and abject race of people in the world. Ammianus Marcellinus says, “ The
“ Egyptians

“ Egyptians were not formed for mirth or pleasure: they
 “ worshipped their gods with sorrow and fear: while the
 “ Greeks and Romans made religion an object of joy and
 “ festivity.” We are told, by Diodorus Siculus and Plu-
 tarch, that the cultivation of music, an art, which the
 Greeks and Romans thought so necessary, to humanize
 and soften mankind, was prohibited by their government.
 Dio Chrysostom informs us, that poetry was interdicted
 among them, as well as music. Strabo says, that the
 sound of instruments was not heard in their temples; but,
 that their sacrifices were made in silence. Under the Pto-
 lemies, on the contrary, music was very much cultivated;
 and their religious ceremonies were distinguished by pomp,
 and embellished with all the charms of vocal and instru-
 mental melody. This is a most striking and wonderful
 phenomenon, in the history of arts and sciences, this total
 and gloomy change, in the pursuits, the genius, and tem-
 per of a whole nation. Licentiousness, gaiety, and mirth,
 even in excess, prevailed under the dynasty of the Ptole-
 mies; poetry and music were cultivated with an ardent
 enthusiasm. Whence arose the melancholy transformation?
 The ingenious and learned Dr. Burney accounts for it, in
 a manner that does honour to his feelings and liberality.
 “ All this is reconcileable, and consonant to the nature of
 “ things: for, when these writers visited Egypt, its inha-
 “ bitants were in a state of slavery, and had been so for
 “ five hundred years before; and though not like the
 “ Jews, in a strange land, yet, like them, they *had hung*
 “ *their*

“ *their harps upon the willows.*” The Roman government, no doubt, was very grinding and oppressive to the provinces. This fact is very important; and goes far to shew, how much the state of the *fine arts* depends on the political state of the country: since it demonstrates, beyond a possibility of doubt, the baleful influence of despotism, of whatever kind it may be. It shews that, in its principle, and necessary operation, unless its character and natural tendency be counteracted by some collateral cause, it must be the deadly foe of all cheerfulness, and cultivation of the human spirit.

I flatter myself, I have now sufficiently supported the affirmative of the proposition before us; by a general consideration of the nature of man and his pursuits; by a reference to history, and by striking examples taken from the course and progress of the *fine arts*. I cannot boast of much deep research, or ingenious novelty, in the structure which I have raised. Most of my materials are obvious, and are taken from the surface; yet, perhaps, the application of them, in some parts, may appear new. I perceive my essay has swelled to a formidable bulk; yet I commenced it with a determination to consult brevity: but, in the course of my researches on the subject, I found such a variety of matter, pertinent to my subject, that it proved a much easier task to reject than to compile. Such as my production is, (for I am fully conscious of its defects,) it is offered to the Royal Irish Academy, with all due respect, and with some degree of diffidence. But
judgment,

judgment, and true science, will ever take an extensive view of a subject: they will perceive all the difficulties with which it is surrounded; and, of course, will be disposed to receive an imperfect attempt, with more indulgence than would be afforded to it by presumptuous ignorance.